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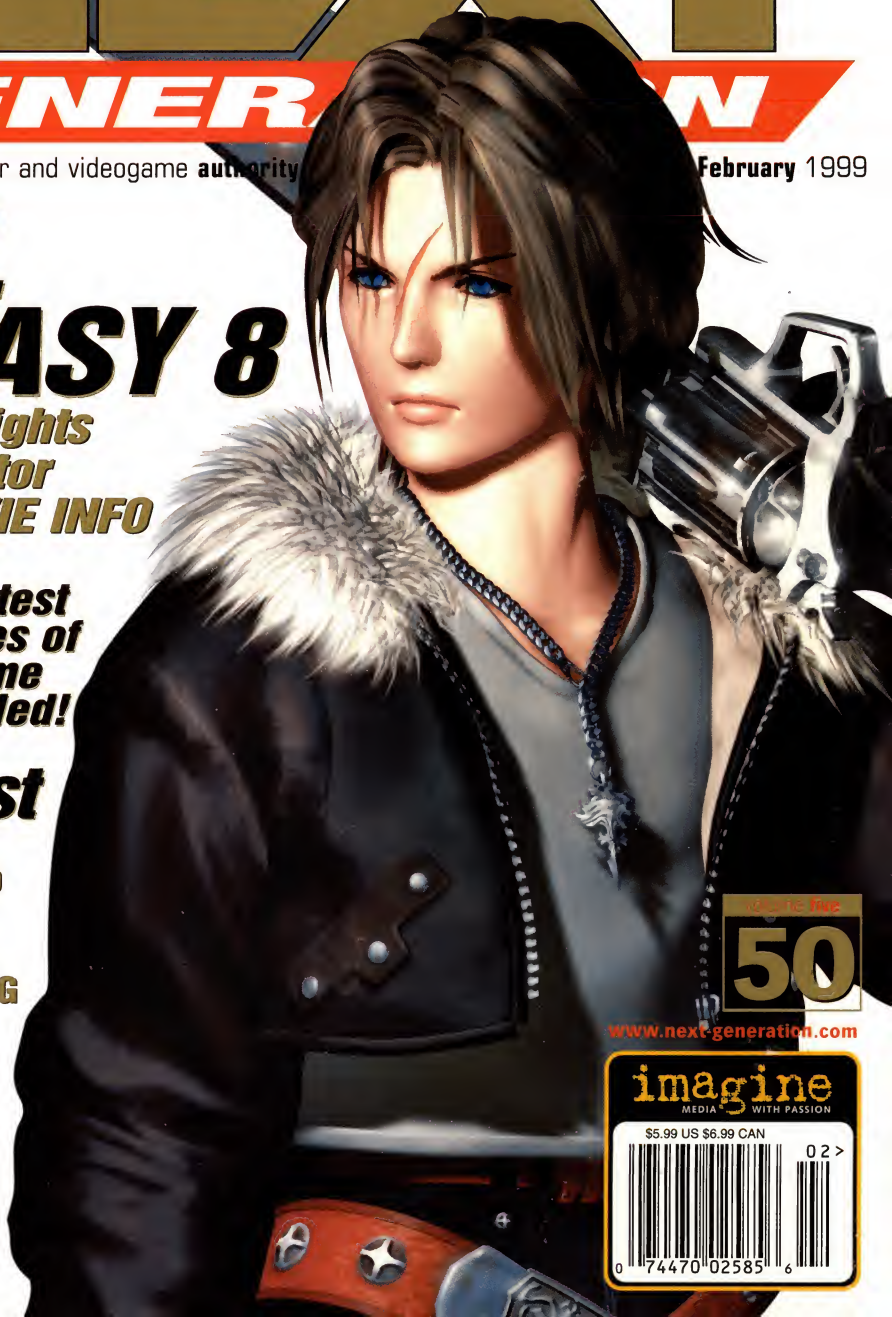
Dreamcast

REVIEWED

- Virtua Fighter 3th
- PLUS**
- Climax Landers
- Virtua Fighter RPG
- Grandia 2

Previewed

- GT World Tour
- Star Trek
- Dark Reign 2
- Braveheart



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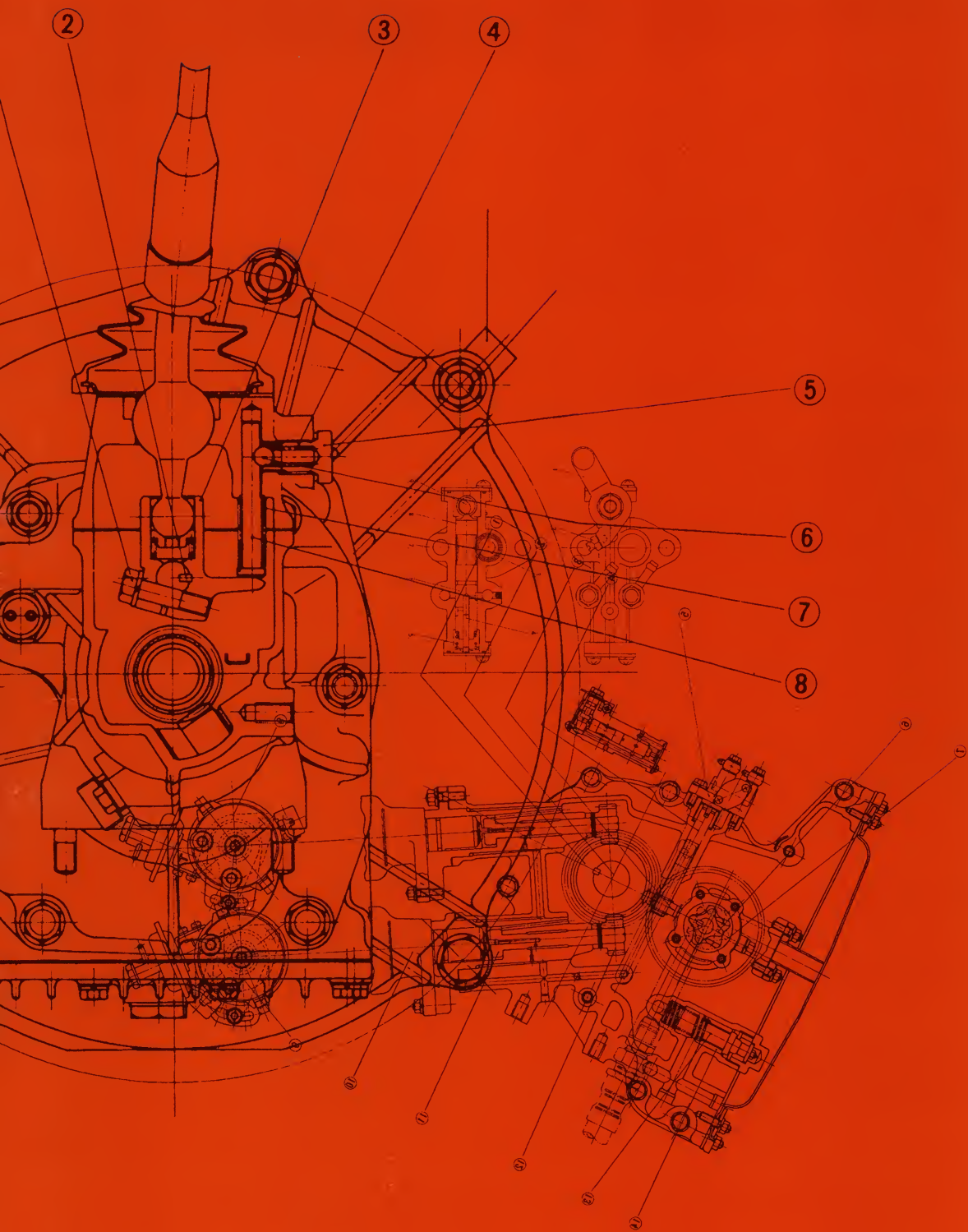
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THE FIGHT OF ITS LIFE

This month all eyes turned to the gray box sitting beneath the TV in the office. After a year of speculation, drama, and more than a little skepticism, Dreamcast has arrived, marking the official birth of the "new" Sega — reinvigorated, well financed, and technologically ahead of the pack. As the Japanese Sega faithful braved the cold and wet to line up in the thousands to buy into the dream, *Next Generation* was there to take the temperature of the launch. Our report begins on page 12.

Sega's success in 1999, however, will depend on more than brute determination, a healthy bank account, and a talent for replicating coin-op hits. It will depend very much on the competition — specifically the software that will either keep the PlayStation afloat or bring a premature end to its reign. This month, we get up close and personal with the man who will help to keep the Sony dream alive — Hironobu Sakaguchi — the creator of the multimillion-selling *Final Fantasy* series. With a movie on the way and a sequel to the blockbusting *Final Fantasy VII* mere months from completion, Sega may be wishing they had him — and Square Soft — on the team (page 86).

And as we begin a new year — and celebrate our 50th issue here at *Next Generation* — it's time to once more take stock. By our reckoning there are over 100,000 videogames out there — and it's about time someone told you which ones you simply can't live without. Lucky for you, it's us. Our Top 50 Games of All Time feature begins on page 72. Welcome to 1999. Welcome to *Next Generation*.

NEXT GENERATION

respasser • need for speed III • dark venge
alien resurrection • deus-ex • slave zero •
• starsiege • moto racer 2 • black & white
ultima: ascension • x-com: alliance • future
homeworld • dell • unreal • beneath
klingon • wargasm •
• whe • the racer
desce • might & m
ultima • rally • rent a hero •
warzone • 2 • vengeance •
blood II • beneath •
theif: the dark project • hostile waters •
• prince • of persia 3D • babylon 5 •
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sabelle • heavy • gear II • ruud •
• shogo: mobile armor division • myth II •
requiem: avenging angel • aliens vs. predato
populous: the beginning • powerslide • sac
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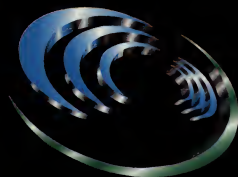
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Thanks for joining us. Next Generation also has passion for changing the text that the marketing people give us if it gets in the way of the section that we usually put funny text in. We will not be denied. See above this box for more funny text.

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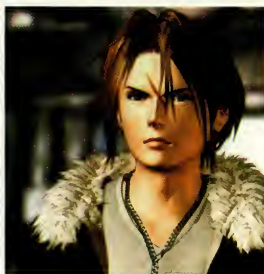
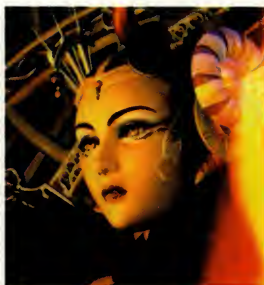
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NEXT GENERATION



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THE MAN BEHIND THE FANTASIES

In his role as writer and designer of the *Final Fantasy* series, Hironobu Sakaguchi's commitment to epic storylines, state-of-the-art graphics, and sweeping musical scores — not to mention a flair for melodrama — has made the series one of the most beloved both at home and abroad. Hard at work on both *Final Fantasy VIII* and the *Final Fantasy* movie, he took a moment to speak with **Next Generation**. Also, a rare conversation with Sakaguchi's partner on *Rad Racer* and *Final Fantasy I* and II, programmer Nasir Gabelli



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THE 50 BEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

To commemorate our 50th issue and to celebrate the incredible strides the industry has taken since we last compiled a list of top games over two years ago in **NG 21**, **Next Generation** once again dives deep into the waters of controversy to harvest the pearls of gamedom (or, those we just like a whole lot), the best 50 games ever made



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Every month we scour the globe and bring back news on the most exciting games and companies around — sometimes prying them from the grasping fingers of PR machines



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Sega launches **Dreamcast** in Japan amidst hardware shortages, while PlayStation darlings, **Psygnosis**, feel the pinch

INTELLIGENCE

Game industry news and analysis

DREAMCAST HAS LANDED

***Virtua Fighter* sells the dream for Sega — but can it exorcise the ghosts of Christmas past?**



Photo: Hiroki Izumi

The streets of Japan's "electric town," Akihabara, played host to the Sega faithful who were eager to grab a Dreamcast with *VF3tb*



A year after details of Sega's first next-generation system emerged, Dreamcast has arrived in Japan. For the newly invigorated Sega, the launch represents something rare in this industry — a second chance. And so on the morning of November 27, Japan's "electric town," Akihabara, played host to the most important

hardware launch in three years. Sega shipped 150,000 Dreamcast units to the stores, which were blockaded by crowds of eager gamers. Despite brisk sales, the rumors of supplying preorders only were unfounded. Many who hadn't signed up in advance walked happily away with a Dreamcast (though the units were limited to

one per person). The two biggest retailers, LAOX and Softmap, found themselves competing for customers. Employees of LAOX resorted to megaphones to entice those waiting in line at Softmap to defect to the (equally long) LAOX line across the street.

The majority of customers were hardcore Sega fans — Saturn owners and arcade otaku eager to snap up a console assured of a steady stream of coin-op conversions, and there was much talk among the faithful of *Project Berkeley* — far more, incidentally, than *Sonic Adventure* (Sonic is a popular Sega mascot in Japan, but few played the 16-bit Sonic games). Many in line were planning on attending Yu Suzuki's *Project Berkeley/Shien Mu* press conference on December 20.

Once inside the stores, gamers were able to purchase the Dreamcast for ¥29,800 (\$260), adding one or more of the four launch titles for ¥5,800 (\$50) each. The most popular — selling at a ratio of almost 1 to 1 with the system — was *Virtua Fighter 3tb*. *July*, *Godzilla Generations*, and *Pen Pen Triclon* fared badly with *July* selling the least (less than 12,000). If you're getting a distinct sense of déjà-vu reading this, then you won't be surprised to learn that the Dreamcast launch mirrors the 1994 Saturn launch in almost every respect. Consider the following:

Three days after the Saturn launch in 1994, Sega had sold through roughly 200,000 units and held a few hundred consoles back

DATASTREAM

Number of people who worked on *Zelda 64*: 200. Number of years the game was in development: 2. Total number of person-hours spent developing *Zelda 64*: 3,504,000. Average playtime for *Zelda 64*: 55 hours. Number of hours of development time in each hour of playtime: 63,709. (Note: the following tests were performed on three subjects, results are averages.) Number of blinks-per-minute while reading in fluorescent light: 14. Numbers of blinks-per-minute while playing *R4: Ridge Racer Type 4*: 5.

ON SALE NOW

At press time, the following games and peripherals were available for Dreamcast in Japan:

Virtua Fighter 3tb (¥5,800/\$50)

Pen Pen Triclon (¥5,800/\$50)

Godzilla Generations (¥5,800/\$50)

July (¥5,800/\$50)

Controller (¥2,500/\$20)

VMS (¥2,500/\$20)

Arcade Stick (¥5,800/\$50)

in order to ensure a steady supply during the PlayStation launch a week later. At close of business on November 29, virtually all 150,000 Dreamcasts had been sold — with another 300,000 due to arrive a week later, the result this time of manufacturing delays. Of the Saturn's launch lineup, only *Virtua Fighter* was a must-buy, and that's true with Dreamcast's lineup, too.

Those who were expecting the Saturn to launch back in 1994 with

Daytona USA and *Panzer Dragoon* were disappointed, as Sega pushed these marquee titles back to the new year and beyond. The same is true of the Dreamcast launch, which is somewhat weakened by the absence of the previously touted *Sega Rally 2* and *Sonic Adventure*. *Sega Rally 2* will now launch January 14, three weeks after the delayed *Sonic Adventure*, which was still on course to appear December 23.



The lines were long, but not as long as those seen during the Saturn launch in 1994, which closely resembles the Dreamcast roll-out in feel



Of the four titles available for the launch, only *VF3tb* (top) proved popular. *July* (middle left) sold just 12,000 copies

Despite a number of parallels with the the launch of a system we now regard as a flop, it pays to remember the differences: In 1994, gamers were so disappointed with the poor conversion of *Virtua Fighter* for the underpowered Saturn that Sega had to create a new version (*VF Remixed*) to prevent them from abandoning the system entirely. In 1998, the main complaint is that the lack of a versus mode makes *VF3tb* too faithful to the arcade version. That Genki was able to get so close to the arcade graphics while developing on unfinished hardware is a testament to the system's future potential.

And with no PlayStation around to spoil the party, Sega has a large window in which to convince the Japanese public that it is well and truly back, and it has gotten off to a solid, if somewhat underwhelming, start. Having sold the first batch of consoles to hardcore fans, the real challenge will emerge in the new year — that's when the second round of software arrives and the campaign to turn loyal PlayStation owners into Dreamcast converts begins in earnest.

NG

INSIDE THE BOX



The Dreamcast unit comes with one controller and the Dream Passport disc, which provides gamers with access to Sega's online service, Dircas, via the 33.6Kb modem

ESSENTIAL BUYS



Virtua Fighter 3tb contains a special bonus CD with a *Shien Mu* (*Project Berkeley*) preview and an extended interview with Yu Suzuki. The VMS is sold separately, as is the excellent Arcade Stick.

LIFTING THE LID ON DREAMCAST

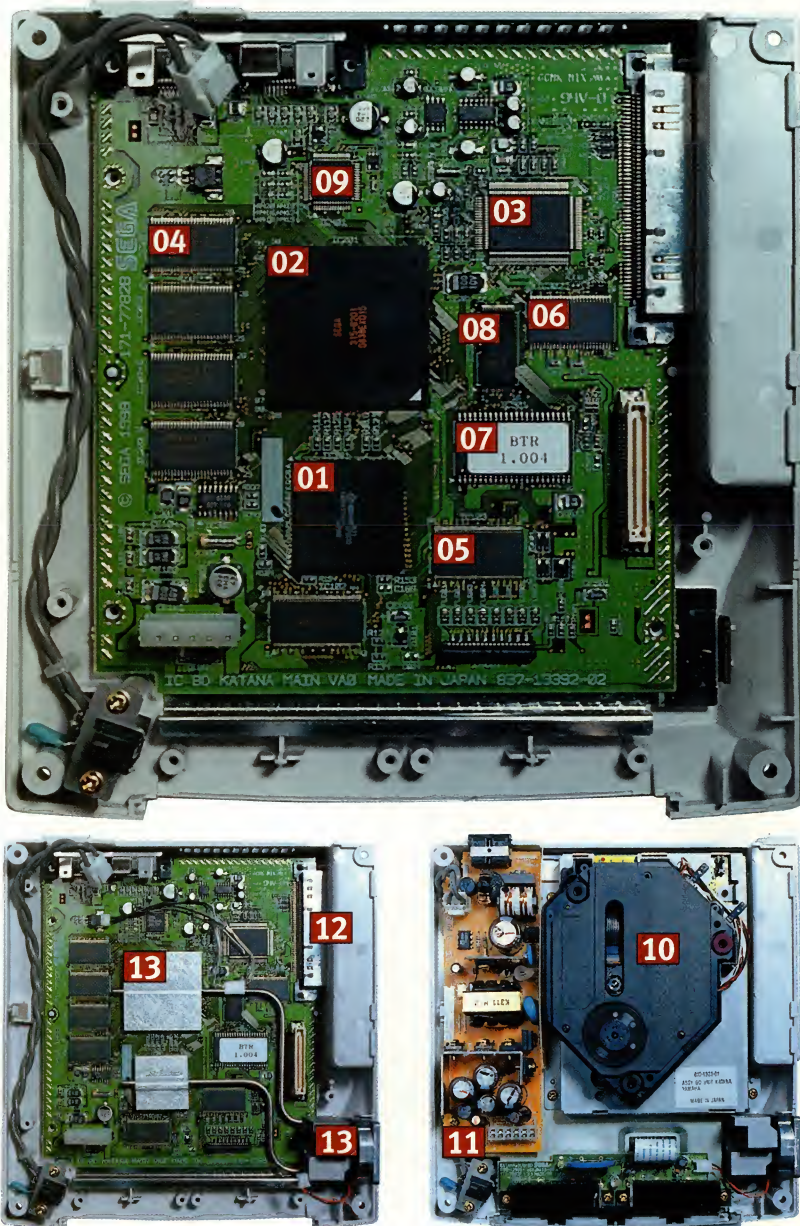
Under the hood of the world's most powerful game machine

No sooner had the Dreamcast arrived than we took a screwdriver to the case and revealed a system in complete contrast to Saturn. The well-designed architecture inside has produced a compact and solid console streets ahead of its predecessor.

The large image (right) shows Dreamcast stripped to its bare bones. The most striking feature is the main graphics processor, VideoLogic's CLX1 — although *Next Generation* was interested to see the "Katana" stamp (one of the console's development names) on the lower edge of the motherboard and other components.

The lower left image shows the unit fitted with its liquid cooling system mounted on heat-absorbent pads. The system is remarkably sturdy given its independent construction.

Finally, the lower right image shows Dreamcast with all its components, including the GD-ROM drive (10) and power transformer (11). In addition, the control ports are mounted on a separate circuit board, along with a renewable lithium back-up battery for the Flash RAM (8).



01 Hitachi SH4 CPU

Essentially an off-the-shelf unit, Hitachi's CPU nonetheless delivers impressive performance. Utilizing a RISC (reduced instruction set) design, the 200MHz processor is reportedly capable of floating-point performance (essential for high polygon counts) four times higher than a Pentium II 266MHz. Perhaps the most telling feature of the SH4 is its ability to calculate 1.4GFLOPS (thousands of floating-point operations), compared to the original *Ridge Racer* coin-op's 0.4GFLOPS. It's also worth noting that the SH4 was designed from its outset to work with Dreamcast's Windows CE OS.

02 NEC/VideoLogic CLX1 graphics chip

Designed by UK-based VideoLogic and manufactured by electronics giant NEC, the CLX1 (aka PowerVR 2DC) is closely related to the new PowerVR Second Generation PC graphics card. Hardware features include full-scene anti-aliasing, fog effects, colored light sourcing, bump-mapping, texture compression, and filtering. NEC's widely reported early manufacturing problems have been attributed to the CLX1's 0.25micron technology (rather than the 0.35micron used in other 3D chips). Although a maximum polygon count of almost four million is claimed by Sega, real-world performance is actually around half that figure.

03 Yamaha AICA sound chip

Capable of 64-channel output, plus Digital Signal Processor effects including reverbs. The AICA also supports 3D audio effects if connected to a suitable surround-sound system. Given the power of Yamaha's chip, it should be possible for game musicians to move away from CD-streamed tunes towards more interactive music.

04 16Mb main operating RAM

As the cost of semiconductors continues to fall, so the amount of RAM (and, indeed, ROM as used in N64 cartridges) in console technology has risen. Dreamcast's allocation of main RAM is about eight times higher than the PlayStation's 2Mb.

05 8Mb video RAM (VRAM)

As in its PC incarnation, the CLX1 chipset requires distinct RAM to function. To this end, Sega has fitted Dreamcast with a further 8Mb of dedicated VRAM that can be used either with or without texture compression, although the latter obviously allows for a greater number of textures onscreen.

06 2Mb audio RAM

Dedicated to the Yamaha AICA DSP chip, this separate bank of RAM puts Dreamcast's audio system on an equal footing with many PC sound cards.

07 Boot ROM

The Boot ROM contains basic system information for Dreamcast's start-up routine, including an entry for which OS is being used. Also known as the BIOS.

08 128Kb Flash RAM

Used for the storage of low-level user-definable information, such as date and time. It also stores log-in information for user's Internet account.

09 Video encoding processor

Unlike the Nintendo 64, Dreamcast offers a fully wired RGB output in addition to a composite signal. Standard resolution is 640 x 480 (the highest available on current television sets), interpolated down from the CLX1's 1,920 x 480 signal. Through the use of a VGA adaptor it's possible to use PC monitors to display Dreamcast games, while standard connectors such as S-Video and SCART in Europe are also supported.

10 GD-ROM Drive

In an attempt to hamper amateur CD piracy using PC CD writers, Sega has chosen a Yamaha-developed "GD-ROM" drive, which stores 1,000Mb (1Gb) of data. This makes it incompatible with standard 630Mb drives. While the GD-ROM's 12x speed may sound impressive, it has a total of 26Mb of RAM to fill, compared to the 2Mb that a PlayStation's 2x CD-ROM has to deal with.

11 Power supply (120V Japanese specification)

A modular construction allows for easy localization of Dreamcast's PSU. The unit simply slots onto the motherboard via a large multipin connector.

12 Modem

For the Japanese market, Dreamcast is shipped with a 33.6Kbps Rockwell unit, although thanks to its modular design, the modem can be upgraded at a later date. While Sega of America recently announced that it intends to launch Dreamcast with a 56.6Kbps unit, plans for a modem in Europe have yet to be finalized.

13 Liquid cooling system

Due to the high operating temperature of Dreamcast's main processor and graphics chips, Sega has opted to fit a system of pipes carrying purified water over the chips to a heat exchanger. Should the external vent become blocked, causing the system to overheat, a thermal cut-out ensures that the power is switched off.

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IN THE STUDIO

In an interview with German games publication MANIAC, Confounding Factor's co-founder, Paul Douglas, revealed the company's plan to develop *Galleon* for Dreamcast. "A Dreamcast version of *Galleon* will be produced," says Douglas, "however, we are still waiting for final dev kits and libraries. But that's OK, because we are very busy trying the editors needed to piece together the game. Because we are so impressed by the Dreamcast specs, we are strongly considering leading on Dreamcast."

Douglas and Toby Gard created the original *Tomb Raider* while at Core Design, before leaving to form Confounding Factor. According to MANIAC editor Jörg S. Tittel, the interview took place back in October, so it's more than likely that the Set5 dev kits are already up and running in the Confounding Factor offices. *



Considering GT Interactive's long-standing relationship with Mike Judge, creator of *Beavis and Butt-head*, don't be surprised if the company comes up with the green light for a *King of the Hill* game. As the TV show airs on the Fox network, the license would seem to naturally fall into Fox Interactive's lap, however sources close to GT indicate the company was close to signing a deal with Judge. In other news, the *Beavis and Butt-head* PlayStation title being developed by New Level Software may be on hold, as rumor has it there have been problems between GT and developer New Level Software.

In early December, Square Soft



announced a new title through a two-page advertisement in Japan's *Famitsu* magazine. Called *Racing Lagoon*, the game vaguely bills itself as a "High-speed driving RPG." The game is scheduled for a spring 1999 release in Japan. Expect specific details to appear in the coming months.



It's not all about making games for Doug TenNapel and his team at The Neverhood. TenNapel, most remembered for developing the character Earthworm Jim at Shiny, took a break after completing *Skullmonkeys* to direct *Mothman*, a "live-action sci-fi comedy with a touch of horror" that he also wrote. In keeping with company form, *Mothman* was scored by Terry Taylor, who did the music for *Neverhood* and *Skullmonkeys*. The film is now in post-production, and was shot on location in West Virginia for \$60,000 and should be hitting the festival circuit this spring. TenNapel is also working on an offbeat comic called *Gear*, based on cats that drive giant mechanical robots. But what about the games? Rest assured, The Neverhood has since returned to game development with *Boom Bots*. This 3D fighting game will feature open arenas as in *Bushido Blade* and is being done in the company's unique claymation style.

Microsoft insiders have revealed to **Next Generation** that the *Shadow Run* game in development by FASA Interactive has been killed. The action/RPG for the PC made its debut to the world last June in the FASA Interactive feature that appeared in **NG 42**. Microsoft, who are in the process of purchasing FASA Interactive, killed the project after its lengthy development failed to show much progress. Even when approached with biscuits, Microsoft and FASA spokespersons growled a stern "no comment."

PSYGNOSIS SLIMS DOWN

As the publisher searches for another hit, operations are consolidated

With rumors of a GT Interactive U.S. distribution deal in the cards, Psygnosis faces its latest string of layoffs at its Foster City, CA, branch. Employing just over 200 people two years ago, the Psygnosis workforce rose to 800 at its peak,

third-party distributor relations. Those leaving the company were given notice of the shakedown in December and include entry-level employees as well as department heads. This round of company layoffs was rumored as a way for the company to appear more appealing to prospective buyers (Eidos is rumored to be the biggest among them). But despite other rumors pointing the finger at GT Interactive as the next big company courting Psygnosis, sources at the Foster City offices have denied the claim. No official word has been issued regarding which U.S. company will take over the distribution of Psygnosis' titles here in the States.

A spokesperson at Psygnosis stated that these latest layoffs will in no way interfere with any Psygnosis projects in the works, including the PC action-adventure title, *Drakan*, which is still set for a Q2 release.

NG



The Psygnosis Owl joins the growing list of endangered species in North America

between publishing branches that stretch out over North America, Germany, Spain, Australia, Sweden, and the U.K.

As part of a move to consolidate operations into its Liverpool headquarters, more than 30 employees at the Foster City, CA office will be let go. Until now, the Foster City branch was the only publishing arm of the company that did not rely on the Liverpool office for its administrative functions, which include sales, management, and human resources. The remaining 13 employees at the Foster City office (and several at the San Francisco-based development studio) will now focus on marketing, public relations, and

LAN PARTY UPDATE

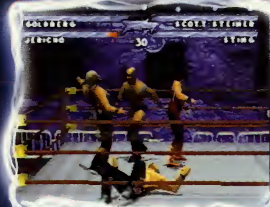
Want to network your house or dorm but don't want the hassle of laying out all that cable? Then you need HomeFree, available now from Diamond Multimedia (www.diamondmm.com). This wireless system uses high frequency radio (2.4GHz) to connect up to 16 PCs, either desktop or laptop in any combination. One machine acts as the network's server, and the system's effective range is about 150 feet. The server requires one free PCI slot for the card, while client machines only need a free ISA (or PCMCIA in the case of a laptop). Best of all, the basic setup is only \$200, with additional ISA cards priced at \$100 each.



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HARDCORE

Four of us were sitting in my friend Mike's room playing *Mario Kart 64*. We were playing on the Rainbow Road track. I was trailing the leader, Luigi (Brian), the whole race. With about a quarter of the track left I hit Luigi with a red mushroom and shot him off of the track, leaving me with the victory. Brian got so upset that he jumped on me and started a wrestling match, which quickly turned ugly — I broke my wrist, and Brian broke one of his fingers. The next day we were back playing *Mario Kart* again.

Darren L. Perleberg
Darren_Perleberg@ndsu.nodak.edu

Got a hardcore story? Send it to
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INDUSTRY WATCH: FOCUS 2

One savvy design company raises the bar

When flipping through *Next Generation* or other game magazines, it becomes painfully clear that the companies that create game advertisements rarely know what they're talking about. It seems few copywriters even play games, much less talk to the people who create them before they hack out the latest clone of Sega's five-year-old shock-tactics marketing scheme. Id, which has taken the lead on so many elements of gameplay in the past, now seems ready to take the lead in picking smart media consultants, by selecting Focus 2 as their design agency.

Why Focus 2? The choice probably had to do with the company's pitch presentation, which came in the form of a custom *Quake* level. "We knew that no other firm had our experience as *Quake* devotees," says Focus 2 President Todd Hart, whose other clients include Herman Miller

(makers of the game industry must-have Aeron chair) and Neiman Marcus.

The company made the pitch on a 36-inch monitor, backed by two SLI Voodoo2 cards. "When you go into the level, there are three

doors," says Hart. "If you go through one of the competition's doors, the walls close in with spikes or you fall in a lava pit. But if you go through our door, the entire arsenal is there. Then you take the elevator to the next level and as soon as you get off, you see 'f2 kfa.'" Id's reaction? "They were in stitches. It was very well received and we got the account on the spot."

Since it got the account, Focus 2 has designed the excellent *Quake 3* logo, as well as a number of *Quake* add-on packages and ads for Id, most of which stand well above the usual quality of ads and packaging in the game industry. The moral of the story? If publishers want their products to excel at all levels, they need people who really understand the product (that is, gamers) to work at every stage in its production, from creation to marketing to advertising. **NG**



Focus 2's understanding and love of *Quake* can be seen in every poster (above) and package

SURFACESUITE PRO

Got something odd shaped that you need texture mapped?

One of the single most vexing problems for 3D artists and animators is that the standard mapping types — planar, cylindrical, spherical, and box — are totally inadequate for accurately placing textures on organically shaped objects. Apply a cylindrical projection to a human head, for example, and the facial texture becomes warped, distorted, and often shows seams.

There are a number of applications and plug-ins that offer customized mapping coordinate systems or allow a model to be "painted" on directly, but what if you're constrained to a standard mapping type by a

game's rendering engine, or you want photorealistic textures? Enter Sven Technologies and Surface-Suite Pro.

Retailing for \$595, Surface-Suite Pro is a remarkably intuitive and easy-to-use utility that enables an artist to position a



The control point system even works well when matching textures with dissimilar geometry — putting a friend's face on Yoda's head, for example

ARCADIA

by Marcus Webb, editor of *RePlay* magazine

photograph onto a model's surface using "control points." The basic function is simple: Place a control point on the photograph you wish to use as a texture (the tip of the nose or the center of the eye, for example), then place a corresponding point on the surface of the model. The texture then becomes anchored to the model's surface at that point, and the program warps the texture within the given projection type so that it looks natural and won't form seams. The artist can continue adding as many points as necessary to achieve realistic results.

Advanced features enable users to build their textures in layers and alpha-blend elements together (an especially useful feature when combining several photographs of a subject's face, sides, and back of the head, for example). Textures can be combined regardless of resolution, color depth, or file format, and the resulting texture can be collapsed into a single image for use in the artist's 3D software of choice. SurfaceSuite Pro can import and export models and their texture coordinate information in the 3D Studio (.3ds) and Wavefront (.obj) formats, and can also import Lightwave (.lwo) and AutoCAD (.dxf) formats.

SurfaceSuite Pro does everything it claims and does it well. The interface is easy to understand, and the results are impressive. The only nit-picky complaint we can level at the product is that all the picture files, object models, and control panels that need to be open to support even a moderately complex project make for a cluttered window and occasionally become confusing. Still, subwindows can be resized and minimized at will, and a comfortable compromise between neatness and functionality can be reached.

If you're going to be working with photorealistic textures and can't use custom texture projection, SurfaceSuite Pro is worth adding yet another dongle to your parallel port. **NE**

SEGA'S NAOMI DEBUTS AT DALLAS SHOW

American arcade owners got their first official look at Sega's Naomi arcade videogame platform during a major trade show held in Dallas just before Thanksgiving. Naomi is the arcade sister of Dreamcast and will use much the same technology. We caught up with Al Stone, president of Sega Enterprises USA, at the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions Expo. He confirmed that Sega would market Naomi to the arcade industry in two ways. First, Naomi will be sold as a universal hardware platform, supported by a software library of games created by Sega and a few select third-party titles.

Second, Sega will offer Naomi to its arcade game competitors as an advanced board available for manufacturers to purchase and use under license. In the latter case, non-Sega game factories will install their own software and sell the package under their own names. For instance, some Namco arcade games in 1999 could have Naomi under the hood, probably powering a slightly modified arcade version of a game that Namco will also sell into the consumer market for Sega's Dreamcast. Sega's own Naomi titles, meanwhile, will certainly be Dreamcast crossovers.

HOME VIDEO'S SUCCESS IS CHOKING THE ARCADE

Year-end reports from all over the world confirm that the consumer videogame market's phenomenal success is still coming largely at the expense of the arcade industry, which remains in a worldwide depression. The IDSA pointed toward \$7.5 billion in consumer hardware and software sales during 1998, with 45% of all U.S. homes having a PC (and games remaining the top application). Meanwhile, both Japanese and American arcade game sales dropped like a rock. Years ago, a game manufacturer that was active and successful in both markets made an average of \$30 in consumer sales for every dollar earned in arcade sales. Now the ratio is probably closer to 50 to 1.

JAPAN'S COIN-OP EXPORTS FELL 18% IN FISCAL 1997

Led by the likes of arcade kingpins Sega and Namco, Japan still dominates the world's arcade video game industry. But the latest figures from their manufacturers' association in Tokyo confirm just how much trouble that industry is in. Despite — or more likely, because of — a skyrocketing consumer market that grew 24% for the fiscal year ending March 1998, Japan's arcade videogame business saw an overall loss. That's especially true in terms of arcade videogame exports, which fell 18.1%. This according to a survey conducted by the Japanese Amusement Machine Manufacturers Association (JAMMA).

In related news, Sega has cut its profit forecast for the current financial year by a whopping 22%, from approximately \$68 million to about \$52.7 million. Sega blames the revision on problems in Asia's financial markets as well as a successful lawsuit brought against Sega by chip maker 3Dfx over a contract to supply hardware for the company's forthcoming Dreamcast and Naomi systems. Sources also report Jaleco has cut back its 1999 revenue forecasts and confirmed its decision to pull back from the U.S. and European markets; they will make arcade videos for the Japanese and Asian markets only. Capcom is likewise scaling back production of arcade videogames, according to the president of their European division.

MIDWAY VIDEO: COIN-OP DOWN, CONSUMER UP

For American makers of arcade videogames, the same pattern is holding true. At market leader Midway Games, consumer sales are through the roof: \$69.7 million for first quarter of fiscal 1998, up almost 75% compared to the same period last year. Yet arcade game sales revenues of \$19.6 million were down

drastically (compared to \$33.6 million during the prior year's same quarter). Midway's big spring/summer 1997 arcade title, *Hyperdrive*, performed so poorly that the company quietly offered arcades that bought it a free conversion to *California Speed*, made by Midway-owned Atari.

THREE MORE ARCADE FACTORIES BACK ARCADE PC

With a nod to the overwhelming (and increasing) dominance of consumer games on console and PC platforms, increasing numbers of traditional U.S. arcade game factories are finding ways to adapt PC titles for arcade use. Their goal is to create a universal platform supported by a library of low-cost, CD-based titles — the dream of so many arcades.

Lazer-Tron is combining their innovative redemption prize system technology with licensed software titles published for arcades by LBE Systems, Opus Entertainment, and several others (titles include *Quake Arcade*, *Actua Soccer*, *The Reap*, and more).

Midwest Amusement Corp. and NEC Electronics Inc. are partnering to create a PC-based arcade videogame system using NEC's PowerVR Series2 3D graphics accelerator. The cross-platform applications created by this partnership should cut game developing and manufacturing costs and create higher-volume sales. Midwest says it has also developed a modern networking system for PC-based arcade videogames.

Ferris Productions, best known for virtual reality arcade games, is launching an aggressive licensing program to pay PC game developers to license software for use on the Ferris UCB arcade system. Ferris' fees will be based on whether the title is made available in retail form or modified for the arcade; Ferris itself will distribute the game in the arcade market. The company has inked commercial licensing agreements with two leading PC game developers, Activision and Blue Byte Inc., to convert their titles into arcade games.

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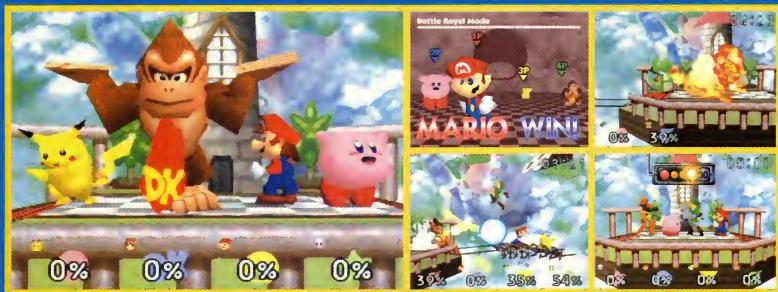


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BIG IN JAPAN

Next Generation reports from the Eastern front

Nintendo gets punchy



Smash Brothers: A surprising release from Nintendo — a fighting game aimed squarely at preteens. Hmm

The dismal state of the Nintendo 64 market in Japan can be attributed to a whole number of problems with the system's software supply — not the least of which is the lack of fighting games. After a trickle of mostly terrible examples, Nintendo has sent Mario and friends to the gym to get in shape for its own take on *Tekken*: The tentatively titled *Smash Brothers*.

Smash Brothers is aimed squarely at the preteen market — currently the only age group that, thanks to regular piggy bank raids to pay for *Pikachu* and *Pocket Monsters* merchandise, seems to even notice the very existence of the Kyoto gaming giant. Trading on its strong suit of characters, *Smash Brothers* stars Kirby (who never did get his *Air Ride*), *Metroid*, Mario, Donkey Kong, Princess Toadstool, Link, Fox McCloud, and *Pikachu*. The

plot requires nothing more of the player than to knock down the opponent as many times as possible by using a mixture of conventional brawn and some decidedly unconventional special moves. The game also promises four-player bouts in the 3D arenas and a hidden boss character for the end of the single-player game. There's no word yet on whether *Smash Brothers* will live to fight on foreign shores.

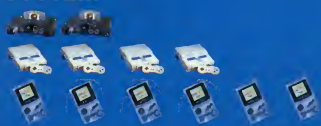
In the States, Nintendo has been eager to stress the teen appeal of its software-starved console, venturing only recently into the self-consciously younger market with its *Pocket Monsters* games. With *Tekken 3* ruling the roost in the U.S. and *VF3tb* weighing in Japan, it's hard to see a wider potential for *Smash Brothers*. Nintendo obviously sees something we don't.

Figures of fun

NA couple of months ago, Nintendo collated all its sales data for N64, GameBoy, and Super Famicom and published the figures. GameBoy comes out on top, but the N64 sales figures are telling when compared to the incredible success of its forerunner, the SNES. The worldwide videogame market has grown exponentially

since the faithful SNES led the pack, but Nintendo has dropped back considerably in the pecking order. Lack of software is the chief cause — according to these figures SNES owners owned on average eight titles per system, compared to just half that figure for software-starved N64 owners.

SYSTEM



HARDWARE

19.78 Million

48.39 Million

69.56 Million

SOFTWARE

88.66 Million

377.45 Million

283.78 Million

SELLING BIG IN JAPAN THIS MONTH

1. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time (Nintendo) N64
2. Dragon Quest Monsters: Terry's Wonderland (Enix) GB
3. Famous Detective Conan (Bandai) PS
4. Simple 1500 Series Vol.1 The Mahjong (Culture Publisher) PS
5. Smash Court 2 (Namco) PS
6. The Legend of Legaia (SCE) PS
7. World Soccer Jikkyou Winning Eleven 3 Final Edition (Konami) PS
8. Pocket Monster Pikachu (Nintendo) GB
9. She's'n (Kid) SS
10. Beat Mania (Konami) PS

Minitalk: Shigeru Miyamoto



... but Shigeru Miyamoto was in ebullient mood as he shared his thoughts with Next Generation

Fresh from completing what we recently described as the game of the century, legendary *Zelda* creator Shigeru Miyamoto, on holiday from the world of Hyrule, took time out to chat about life, the universe, and everything. Or, as we call it, *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*.

Next Generation: *Zelda* is unique in quality and scope, but that depth brings its own problems. One of the things we noticed is that, despite their best efforts, other developers have actually learned very little from *Mario 64* that they've been able to copy in any meaningful way. Do you think they have learned anything from *Zelda*?

Mr. Miyamoto: Even before *Mario*, people knew that it was possible to make that kind of game but no one knew exactly how to do it. Whenever I make a game, I try to make something unique, and I think that's important. I don't actually play that many games myself. I play the odd PC game, and I noticed cameras were key to 3D experiences. But they often seem fixed to suit the convenience of the game's creators and not to suit the convenience of the player. I wanted to challenge that with *Mario 64* and give the camera to the player, which centered around Mario. With *Legend of Zelda*, it's different again. The world is the center of attention, and the cameras are positioned to reflect the most interesting parts of the environment. In addition, the player can define the cameras himself — it's the best of both worlds.

NG: It was rumored that there would be a special version of *Zelda* for 64DD. Is this true?

Mr. Miyamoto: This game was designed with the introduction of the DD in mind, and if you load the game with the drive connected to your system, you will see a different title screen option, which says "Uda *Zelda*" — another version of *Zelda*. There were several ideas I could not incorporate into *Zelda* because of the lack of time and various other factors. For example, I wanted to create some extra dungeons and challenges for those who had completed the quest, and we planned for them with the predicted introduction of the DD next year. But now, we don't know whether we will do this or not. We may have to introduce a Special Edition cartridge next year instead.

NG: Is there anything in *Zelda* you feel you could have done better, or are you completely satisfied with it?

Mr. Miyamoto: I'm not completely satisfied with the animation of some of the characters, and if we had more time, I would like to have corrected that, but at some point we had to say "enough" and finish the game (laughs). But many of the ideas that we



No, sadly, it's not a Karaoke rendition of the *Mario 64* theme from the world's greatest game designer ...

didn't include will be seen in other games that we do in the future.

NG: You've been at the very top of the industry for almost 20 years now. Where do you think the next Shigeru Miyamoto will come from?

Mr. Miyamoto: Even though *Zelda* is supposed to be my own project, others played an important role in many parts of the game — and in *Yoshi's Island* too, which was almost all Hideki Konno's project. On *Zelda* we also had many newcomers supported by old-timers (laughs), and some of those people will soon be capable of having the director positions on their own games.

NG: What about outside of Nintendo?

Mr. Miyamoto: There are many talented people, of course, but I don't feel I am competing directly with them. I compete more with myself by trying to create something new every time I create a game. What is peculiar about this business is that it's one thing to be creative, but quite another to have the mind of a marketer — and you need both [to be successful], which is quite rare. You need to be able to take on the marketing department, and to understand that side of the business, but always push for creative independence. I think people could make much better games if they were allowed to just focus on the creative process, unhindered.

NG: Will *Mario 2* be an N64 title?

Mr. Miyamoto: The prototype of *Mario 2* has been kept on my desk, and remains untouched — Luigi and Mario are running on the display I have. Originally, I wanted to make it for the DD system, but I haven't touched it because of *Zelda*. Maybe I could ask a different group to work on it for me, or perhaps we could make it on a new system, but right now, I don't know.

NG

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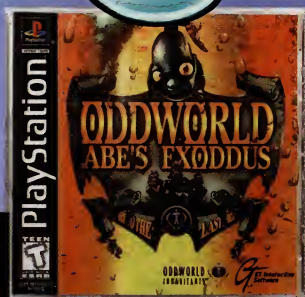
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DREAMCAST COUNTDOWN

Next Generation tracks the progress of Sega's dream machine

The countdown has begun

On November 27th, Dreamcast launched in Japan. By the end of the day, all of the initial 150,000 systems had been sold, many going to those savvy enough to preorder. Sega had at last delivered on its dream and entered the console wars for the fourth time — better armed, better equipped, and with (it hopes) wisdom enough to not only survive the coming battles but to emerge once more as a major force in interactive entertainment. Despite the sellout, however, it was still a shaky start.

Japan's videogames bible, the weekly *Famitsu* magazine, panned the launch lineup — leaving *Pen Pen Tricelon*, *July*, and *Godzilla Generations* to fend for themselves, recommending only *Virtua Fighter 3tb* to the eager Japanese public. The shortage of systems left a seven-day gap between the launch and the next batch — a wasted week that might have cost Sega millions of dollars in potential revenue during a lucrative sales period.

The inclusion of a special bonus CD with *VF3tb* provided some consolation for those early adopters disappointed by the initial lineup of games. The disc carried a short CG sequence and in-game object art from the forthcoming *Virtua Fighter* RPG, *Project Berkeley*, along with an hour-long interview with the game's creator, Yu Suzuki. Dropping the codename, he revealed that the game will be titled *Shien Mu*.

Though remaining tight-lipped about the details, Suzuki-san did reveal his belief that the game will mark the beginning of a new genre. Dubbed "F.R.E.E." (Full Reactive Eyes Entertainment), he struggled to explain the ambitious concept, leaving most to conclude that *Shien Mu* will be an action/adventure with RPG elements. From the brief selection of in-game objects displayed, it also appears to be set in the early '80s (the perfect environment for the tattered-jeans-clad VF characters).

More will be revealed on December 20th, when Suzuki

calls his *Shien Mu* press conference. Rest assured, **Next Generation** will be there to bring you the full scoop. In the meantime, enjoy our review of launch title *VF3tb* and a look ahead at RPGs *Climax Landers* and *Grandia 2*, and the *Resident Evil* clone, *Carrier* — the perfect antidotes for the less-than-perfect *Pen Pen* and friends.



Yu Suzuki provided a brief glimpse of the game on the *VF3tb* bonus CD — but said nothing about the plot



Yu Suzuki gave an extensive interview on the bonus CD, talking at length about his previous work

Dreamcast shows its potential with the stunning and long overdue home conversion of Yu Suzuki's groundbreaking arcade fighter

Virtua Fighter 3tb

FORMAT
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER
Sega Enterprises

DEVELOPER
Sega AM2

RELEASE DATE
Out now (Japan)

ORIGIN
Japan

Originally expected to serve as the proverbial last hurrah for the ill-fated Saturn, *Virtua Fighter 3* was instead — much to the chagrin of Saturn owners — earmarked by Sega to become the first, best demonstration of what its new PowerVR-based Dreamcast console could deliver. Sega couldn't have made a better decision. Seldom seen in U.S. arcades, AM2 Division Chief Yu Suzuki's coin-operated magnum opus (ported to Dreamcast largely by MRC developer Genki) serves not only as a testament to Dreamcast's technological potential,



VF3tb's arcade stages have been meticulously re-created for the home.



Virtua Fighter 3tb contains a mind-boggling level of detail and runs in a higher resolution than the coin-op. Despite simplified character models, the game looks and feels every bit as good as its Model 3 counterpart and represents a complete success for Sega (and coders Genki)

but as a new high-water mark for the fighting genre.

As an arcade conversion, *VF3tb* is unrivaled. Running on Sega's powerful Model 3 hardware in the arcades, many believed it would remain out of the reach of home consoles for years. And fans worried that even if the game did make it to home machines, it would be severely compromised. While gamers were correct in assuming that it would be some time before the game came home, Sega has proven

them dead wrong in regards to the home version's integrity. Sega touted Dreamcast as a machine capable of delivering Model 3 performance at console prices, and *VF3tb* fulfills this promise. A technological marvel, the conversion succeeds in reproducing the stunning visual design, pristine textures, and silky-smooth 60fps speed of its parent, right down to the sometimes-eerie eye movements and facial expressions of the characters.



The level of detail in *VF3tb's* character selection portraits carries through to the very last blow



The game retains its clever effects while maintaining an astonishing framerate

Other than some minute sacrifices in model complexity and reduced animation in the clothing (likely caused by the fact that the conversion was started well before the hardware was finalized), even the most discerning fan of the coin-op version will be hard-pressed to tell the two apart. Considering that the game represents only the very first generation of software for this new system, and the mind boggles at what the future may hold.

Conventional wisdom tells us that beauty is only skin deep, but in the case of *VF3tb* it extends down to the game's foundation. Serving as a unique example of the balance between visual splendor and competent design, it dissolves all preconceptions that if a game looks this good, it can't possibly play any better. As if to thumb its nose at the skeptics, Sega has produced not only the best looking fighting game of all time, but what is, without a doubt, the most playable.

Unrivaled in terms of its range of fighting styles, number (and usefulness) of moves, character control, and overall balance, *VF3tb* elevates the fighting game to an art form. Action-packed yet cerebral, this game rewards split-second reflexes and quick thinking, a circumstance that results in the most authentic brawl that can be had without coming to actual fisticuffs. Instinctual countering, true 3D dodging, and the inclusion of sloped arenas that affect gameplay (something the *Tekken* series

has yet to see) serve only to further cement Sega's supreme reign of the fighting genre.

Sega has not only delivered a new paradigm in arcade-to-home conversions, but the epitome of the next generation in fighting games as well. Save the omission of a traditional versus mode — which will hopefully be rectified for the U.S. release — *VF3tb* stands as a flawless and riveting testament to the potential of the company's new hardware and the software that can be produced for it.

RATING

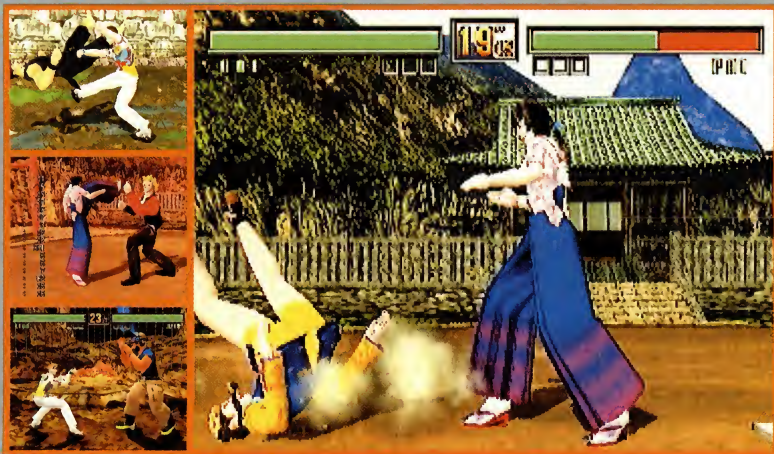
★★★★★

VERSUS MODE M.I.A.

Standing as the single — albeit noteworthy — black mark on *VF3tb*'s otherwise pristine record is the omission of a traditional versus mode. While some home-only additions were made to the game during conversion (a training mode was added) the option to hold a multiplayer tournament was not one of them. Why is that?

While addressing concerns related to the conversion prior to *VF3tb*'s launch, Sega stated that the decision was made in order to retain a faithful coin-op feel; the arcade game didn't have a tournament mode, so why should the home port? The inclusion of a training mode, and a nostalgic "history" mode, however, is enough to make one wonder if the feature was planned, but ultimately scrapped in order for the product to make Dreamcast's November 27 launch.

As it stands, the only way to play head-to-head against a friend is in the original arcade fashion: One player starts, the other joins, and the victor must keep the same character. At present, Sega of America has not disclosed whether it intends to implement a versus mode in the U.S. release, although given the large window between Dreamcast's Japanese and North American launch, there is clearly ample time in which to do so.



Like its arcade parent, *VF3tb* features standard and team battle play — the port boasts an additional training mode

Climax Landers

FORMAT
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER
Sega

DEVELOPER
Climax

RELEASE DATE
February 25th (Japan)

ORIGIN
Japan

Climax *Landers*, the impressive new RPG for Sega's Dreamcast, is being eponymously produced by Climax. But don't confuse this Climax with the Climax Graphics that's busy with *Blue Stinger* (**NG 48**).

Responsible for Saturn titles *Dark Saviour* and *Landstalker*, Climax has maintained a strong relationship with Sega through the game giant's darkest hours. Members of both the Dark



Landers promises to be the most visually satisfying RPG yet seen on a console

Saviour and *Landstalker* teams worked on *Landers*, and their influence is apparent. The stunning visuals fulfill Dreamcast's true potential perhaps better than any other title yet seen. Colorful, detailed, and rich in atmosphere, *Climax Landers* shouts its next generation status with every frame.

Next Generation got the message, and hot-footed it down to Climax's headquarters in the heart of Tokyo's Shinjuku district to meet company President Hiroshi Naito.

Next Generation: RPGs are all about telling a story



and delivering a convincing atmosphere. What's *Landers'* theme?

Hiroshi Naito: RPGs often take place in the Middle Ages. For *Landers*, we included some medieval influences but also some modern touches — convenience stores, for example. *Landers* is a complex mixture of very different worlds. It's a game you can play many times — you can continue to play it even after finishing the main story.

NG: Most modern RPGs are usually quite large, is that true of *Landers*?

Mr. Naito: *Landers* will be a very long game, as are the *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest* series. But in *Landers* you'll be able to stop playing, take a rest, and start to play again.

NG: *Final Fantasy VII* offered a vast number of locations to explore. Will *Landers* offer a similar experience?

Mr. Naito: It's not an RPG where you have a huge world with numerous towns. It's one town that develops around you. There are numerous



Despite all the action taking place in one huge town, Climax provides many different environments that expand and develop as you play

randomized "Dungeons." In fact, Dungeons are not the dark, underground places you might imagine; they can be temples, forests, etc. It's not like the *Shining Darkness* world.

NG: You say the game can be played many times, but with only one location, won't the player soon learn all of the game's secrets?

Mr. Naito: Dungeons change each time you enter them. You enter each Dungeon as a beginner and progressively power up. Your character's abilities will not increase, but the player's skill will develop. You'll gain experience and knowledge about the Dungeon you explored. And if you enter the Dungeon and complete it without dying, the stage will be clear.

NG: How does the player interact with NPCs?

Mr. Naito: Although there's only one town, it's inhabited by dozens of people, and each of them has a different way of life. As you progress through the game you'll experience their personalities and differences. They'll bring variety to the story.

NG: How are you engineering the game's battle sequences?

Mr. Naito: We thought very hard about the strategic aspects of combat. Players will fight and try to find solutions, and if those solutions don't work they'll have to find different spells or weapons [to resolve conflicts]. But you don't fight to collect money or experience points. Players will have to win battles using their heads.

NG: How do you like developing for Dreamcast?

Mr. Naito: Things that were not possible before are easy now because of Dreamcast's friendly development environment. But because the machine's



As the game progresses, players travel in time, revisiting the same locations

performance is so high, users are more demanding — they expect more. And that is what's difficult.

NG: Although you won't be using Dreamcast's modem, how will the VMS (VM unit in the U.S.) work with *Landers*?

Mr. Naito: There will be more than 10 games for the Visual Memory unit — action games and a casino-type game, plus one based on the Tamagotchi concept. Others will be more related to *Landers*' content, and they'll be very useful to progress in the main game. Also, you can put enemy monsters in the VMS and then reintroduce them to the Dreamcast as your friends.

NG: How much more work is there to be done on the game?

Mr. Naito: *Landers* will be released in February in Japan. We're still working on the battle scenes in order to offer the best balance possible. We'll definitely be working on it until the release.

FRAME GRIDE

The mystery *Virtual-On*-style game seen at the Tokyo Game Show has finally been revealed. *Frame Gride* is the creation of From Software, makers of *Armored Core* and *King's Field* and boasts expansive arenas for its distinctly *Virtual-On*-style battles. Sega obviously takes the view that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Just how good a clone is *Frame Gride*? You'll have to wait until the Japanese release in March to find out.



The character models are simply stunning, as is the level of detail of the fully 3D environments



At the Tokyo Game Show, *Frame Gride* basked in the reflected glow of *Virtual On*

Grandia 2

FORMAT
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER
Sega

DEVELOPER
Game Arts

RELEASE DATE
Summer 1999 (Japan)

ORIGIN
Japan

D2 UPDATE

Warp has released more information on its much-delayed *D2*. Now scheduled for a spring release in Japan, the 3D action/adventure title combines the exploration and puzzle solving of *Tomb Raider* with the all-out bloodletting of *Quake*. These latest screens support the notion that after years of creating odd and esoteric titles, Kenji Iino has finally decided to enter the mainstream, where solving complex puzzles gives way to fast-paced action and the repeated ventilation of aliens. That's assuming it ever ships, of course.



D2: Has Kenji Iino finally gone commercial? Maybe, but it's still likely to be a weird game



Apparently, Dreamcast won't have a shortage of RPGs. *Grandia 2* joins *Climax Landers* and *Evolution* on the hot list

Although a glance at Saturn's software catalog reveals a conspicuous absence of RPGs, the circumstances in Japan are somewhat different. While the *Shining Force* series was very well received by the RPG crowd, *Grandia* easily ranked among the format's top three examples of the genre. This no doubt pleased developer Game Arts, as well as going some way to pay back the team's two-year investment in the project.

Though understandably unwilling to divulge too many details about *Grandia II*, producer Takeshi Miyaji has revealed that the original characters, now all in their 20s, will return. The world they explore, however, will be far larger than in their previous quest. And whereas the first installment was a mostly drama-led venture, this time around Game Arts is striving to deliver something closer to an *Indiana Jones*-style adventure, which should considerably widen the title's appeal.

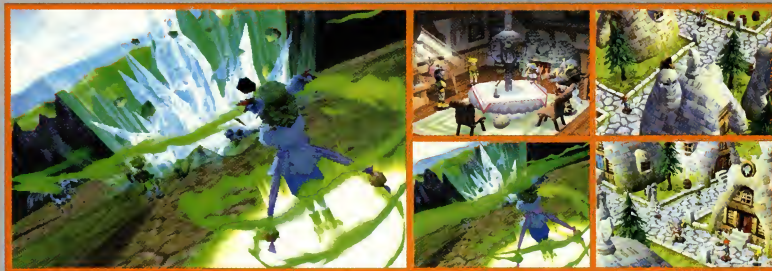
The real improvements remain essentially cosmetic in nature, but their influence on the game's atmosphere is evident. Towns visited by the characters feel alive, with visually diverse inhabitants going about their business. The level of detail is impressive and serves as an indication of things to come as well as setting the standard for other next-generation RPGs. Inside dwellings, for example, it's clearly possible to distinguish between artificial illumination and natural light streaming through windows. The characters are constructed with — in 32-bit terms, at least — ludicrous quantities of polygons, while the dynamic camerawork adds to the lavish effect.



The spell effects are every bit as special as those seen in Square's mighty *Final Fantasy VII*

According to Miyaji, there are two network options currently planned for *Grandia II*. One would be the normal-style game, while the other follows the same visual lines as other multiplayer RPGs — such as the isometric structure seen *Diablo*, for example. There are also tentative plans for the inclusion of an in-game link that would take you to a *Grandia II* web site, where you would be able to exchange information and character data.

However, as the proportion of Dreamcast owners expected to make use of such a homepage currently stands at 1% in Japan, Game Arts is wisely concentrating its efforts on finalizing the one-player experience, which should prove to be something really special.



The towns your character visits on his quest are amazingly detailed and feature numerous NPCs

Carrier

Carrier may have only been recently announced, but it already has a more serious fight on its hands than Jaleco could possibly have anticipated. Climax Graphics' *Blue Stinger* should prove a worthy adversary, but **Next Generation** suspects that this is not Jaleco's main worry. Rather, that honor goes to *BioHazard: Code Veronica*. Capcom shook the gaming world by unveiling its latest horror adventure on Sega's new hardware and already it looks impressive.



Clearly a *Resident Evil* clone, *Carrier* should make the extended wait for *Code: Veronica* a little easier

Naturally, Jaleco hopes *Carrier* will make up some ground before *Veronica*'s release. Its setting, an aircraft carrier named *Heimdal*, is less orthodox than the typical urban dystopia or alien spacecraft. The rest of the proceedings, however, are a little less unusual. A cargo of mysterious weapons aboard the ship is responsible for an incident which you, as either the imaginatively named Jack or Jennifer, must investigate.

As the plot follows the script of other *Resident Evil* clones fairly closely, it should come as little surprise to find zombies lurking beneath deck. These not-so-fragrant individuals have to be stopped, preferably by blowing one of their limbs to smithereens, which results in a shower of gore likely to send Senator Lieberman into a fit of apoplexy. Of course, it's not just endless, mindless shooting. There

are also puzzles that must be solved in order to progress through the game.

Visually, early shots of *Carrier* are not quite up to *Blue Stinger*'s standard, although the use of a dynamic camera is well done. There are further attractive touches; for example, your actions affect the course of events as well as the ending — and, while you control one character, the CPU's "auto action system" takes care of the other. Should the Dreamcast's CPU suffer a momentary lapse and allow its character to get into trouble, Jaleco claims the game structure will automatically alter so that you may help out your buddy. To keep you on edge, such events occur throughout the game. It could prove an interesting feature, but it remains to be seen whether these touches will be enough to keep *Carrier* afloat in the inevitable wake of Capcom's killer app.



Unlike *Resident Evil*, of course, Dreamcast's power makes it possible to render the world in realtime

FORMAT
Dreamcast

PUBLISHER
Jaleco

DEVELOPER
Jaleco

RELEASE DATE
TBA

ORIGIN
Japan



While you control one protagonist, the CPU takes care of the other — as seamlessly as possible

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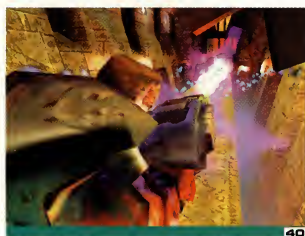
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ALPHAS

Tales from the world of game design



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66



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So many big names are working on new projects these days, we thought you'd like to know all about them.

40 Quake 3: Arena PC
 If we have to tell you what this is, go away

44 Adventure Racing N64
 The Need for Speed team is at it again

46 Jumping Flash 3 PlayStation
 Sony's latest is PocketStation compatible

48 Star Trek: New Worlds PC
 And it's a realtime strategy game

50 Boss GT World Tour N64
 Boss takes the street with its latest racer

52 Braveheart PC
 William Wallace rides again

53 Darkstone PC
 A Diablo clone that stands out on its own

54 Pandemic Studios Multi
 The creators of Battlezone break out

58 Conquest PC
 Realtime strategy enters space

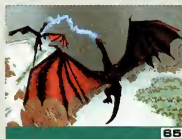
60 Starlancer PC
 It's like Wing Commander except ... um...

61 Guardian's Crusade PlayStation
 Activision imports its first console RPG

62 Dragon Valor PlayStation
 A new action/RPG from Namco

MILESTONES

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65



65



66



66



66



66

"The best online-only game we've ever seen."
Online Gaming Review

"One of the most brilliant action games around."
Gamesdomain

"This game looks to be hotter than Diablo."
E3 Show Daily



TEAM UP &

"don't outrun
me Sulky we
got a date with
the endzone"

Thorn



commando Thorn sees
his chance to be a hero

"shake your
boots commandos
I need cover
fire here"

Sulky



heading upfield ball in hand
Sulky realizes she's target #1



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many flags as you can for as long as you can



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base stations while defending your own

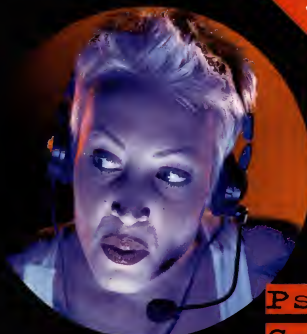


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NG ALPHAS

QUAKE III: ARENA

Id fires back with impressive new technology in its latest *Quake* game — but is it enough?

There's an industry of PC developers hard at work on what they hope will be *Quake* killers. But no one has done it yet simply because no one works harder or smarter than John Carmack and his team. And as history has shown us, whenever someone thinks they're close to topping Id the boys in Mesquite, Texas launch another groundbreaking game that frags the competition all the way back to their drawing boards.

So it is with *Quake III*. While other companies (Valve for one) are successful at adding brilliant plots and story to Id's engines, Id itself is busy redefining what *Quake* is — not just creating a moving target, but totally changing the rules of the game: *Quake III: Arena* will not have a story or quest mode. Instead, the gameplay is more akin to a fighting game:

"The ultimate objective in *Quake III: Arena*," says Id Lead Designer Tim Willits, "is to reach the ranking of one — to be the grand champion." At its core, the single-player game will be a series of deathmatches spread out over numerous levels against CPU-spawned opponents. Perhaps this isn't as inspiring a single-player scenario as *Half-Life*, but that's not the point.

In the beginning, players will start with a selection of several easy maps, each with single-story architecture that won't require jumping, and the first-level bots will be fairly easy to kill.

"You start out at the lowest ranking," Willits says, "and there are only a couple of levels on which you can play. Once you achieve a high enough rank, you move to the next set of levels."

Willits admits these first levels will be extremely easy for the hardened *Quake* player but says they are being designed to ease novice players into the conventions of multiplayer deathmatching. Hardcore players needn't worry, though, *Quake III* is being designed to have an enormous amount of replay value and customization options. And while it probably won't appear to be a radical departure for those who've played multiplayer *Quake*, there are instantly noticeable new things. First and foremost, there are now three character classes to choose from.

"We have the light guy, the medium guy, and the heavy guy," says Willits, "The light guy, of course, runs faster but can't take as much damage. The heavy guy can take more damage and run slower, basically. But it's great being the heavy guy because you can survive a real good shot to the head and keep on playing."

Even as early as it is, the designers

"I don't think you're going to be bitching about it being too brown"

Tim Willits, Lead Level Designer, Id Software

feel this choice creates a whole new dynamic in the game, and all already have favorite character classes.

"We're hoping that people won't just migrate to one," Willits says, "we're hoping that we set up enough differences and advantages and disadvantages to make [each one] cool."

And of course, with only multiplayer maps as the focus, the level designers have had to change their philosophy.

"We want to give an arena-type feel,"



Molten lava. As if you were you expecting something else?



The cold, intimidating architecture remains true to the *Quake* series, and these carved stone levels are even more ominous than those in past *Quake* versions

FORMAT
PC

PUBLISHER
Activision

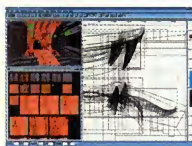
DEVELOPER
id Software

RELEASE DATE
TBA

ORIGIN
U.S.



Segmented character skeletons enable independent movement of the head and torso. Notice how the character's neck realistically arches skyward



Obviously, Id's designers have taken advantage of the engine's new curved surface rendering power



The designers have modeled themselves into the game. Above from left: Brandon James, Christian Antkow, Tim Willits, and Paul Jaquays. They have also found (top) an amusing way to demo the new torso animation

Willits explains, "not like a gladiator arena, where the maps are simple holes. But something where there's unique architecture, where there are interesting areas that are specifically designed to play the best deathmatches."

Willits, along with level designers Brandon James and Paul Jaquays, has been building larger levels with more identifiable areas. "You'll be talking to your friend," Willits says, "and you can say, 'Hey, let's play that map with the laser grid that protects the power up,' instead of just, 'Let's play map 26.'" Throughout the course of the game, environments change in style, from futuristic tech levels to a giant construct that appears to be the innards of a demon. Already *Quake's* familiar and creepy industrial, carved stone, and castle environments have been taken to a new level.

"It's not our goal to reproduce the mundane world," Willits says, in response to *Next Generation's* prodding about real-world environments. And in a run-through of several of the maps, Willits points out a variety of unique design work.

"You don't see this in other first-person shooters, because they can't do this stuff," he continues, "nobody's even come close. So I don't think you're going to be bitching about it being too brown."

And while complex scripted experiences tend to be growing in other first-person, single-player games, they won't be found here.

"We can't have one-offs," says Brandon James, "because these maps have to have a continuous loop to them."

Nor will any of the bot's actions ever be scripted. However, that doesn't mean the bots won't have personalities. "We definitely want a handful of really distinct,

unique guys," says James, "and we're going to have a bunch of guys that are schmoees, like the Red Shirts in *Star Trek* for people to get in there and kill."

Everyone at Id agrees that the success of the single-player game lies mainly with the team's ability to make the bots play as naturally as possible at different skill levels. James feels that creating distinct personalities for each is a huge challenge, and that singular responsibility lies solely with the AI programmer, John Cash.

"It's really easy to make a bot to just kick your ass," says Cash, "make them always hit you, lead you perfectly." Making them play poorly, but believably, has been Cash's biggest challenge, and his demo suggests he has risen to it admirably. On an early map, Cash spawns two bots. The first is a real rookie, or "keyboard player," as Cash calls him, while the other is just a bit more experienced. In a deathmatch with *Next Generation*, the difference in skill was immediately noticeable.

Cash humbly admits that it comes from a lot of tweaking. "The first time we put them on a level," he says, "the guys were fighting with them, and they started laughing. I said, 'what's so funny?' They said, 'every time we're fighting, they'll strafe right over into the lava.' Normally they wouldn't go in there, but during the heat of combat I had them so focused on the fight, they weren't checking where they were going. Nobody's bad enough to run in it blindly."

Scaling the skill of the bots is one thing, but giving them personality is another. Cash watches online multiplayer games, and explains that there are a few simple things most people do that bots can replicate straight off. Some bots will

The new quad damage effect is a beauty. It is modeled here by "Visor," a medium-class playable character





This bright, futuristic, single-story level is one of several Id has created for beginners to acclimate themselves to the deathmatch experience

have a preferred weapon, some will be very aggressive, some will camp or hang back, or be very health conscious.

Other observations aren't as tangible. For example, like a human, the bots will eventually zero in on a player if he does not move for a while. And like many online *Quake* players, there will be those bots who know the levels exceptionally well yet still can't aim, and those who may shoot well but can't remember weapon locations.

Be it single or multiplayer,

Quake 3 will feature major animation improvements. Most impressive is a new segmented skeletal animation system. If two players are standing in the room facing each other, and one looks at the ceiling, the other player will see his head crane skyward in a very lifelike way. Also there's knock-back animation for players who get sent flying from a serious hit.

How about *GoldenEye*-style hit-specific animations, and location-based damage? The designers feel they slow down the game and aren't noticeable enough to be worth it. "There's a reason things aren't in the game," Willits explains, "it's not that we couldn't do them. I mean, we have John [Carmack] and nobody else does. It's just that we decide what goes in and what doesn't. And the end product is what's important, and the experience that you're having."

So what is Id's legendary co-founder and Lead Programmer Carmack contributing to *Quake III*? The most noticeable graphic effect from the master programmer is the new curved surfaces, done with a Bezier mesh render he wrote this year.

"I went through a learning process," says Carmack, "you know, again, a lot of

people think that I just know everything at all times. And the truth is, I had never done any curve rendering before the start of this year."

Obviously his research (which included pouring through Siggraph

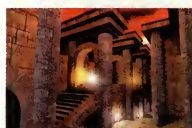
"It's not our goal to reproduce the mundane world"

Tim Willits

proceedings and writing numerous experimental renderers) paid off, as the curved surfaces that appear in *Quake III* unrivaled.

As anticipated as Id games are, the team is hesitant to say what's to be included before the game is done. When quizzed about the weapons, here's what Id tentatively listed: a Shotgun, a Plasma Gun, a Rail Gun, a Machine Gun, a Carbine, and the BFG. A Lightning Gun is currently in development, but the team wasn't sure whether it was going to "chain" or not. A "Bouncy Gun" with reflecting shots was working, but not everyone was very excited by it, so it may not see the final cut. And the midrange, melee weapon? Still very tentative is a flamethrower. Other interesting tentative advances include a short-term flight power-up as well as a grappling hook that may be capable of grabbing other players.

Will *Quake III* be enough to satisfy the hardcore market already well-versed in the art of the deathmatch? If you've owned a PC long enough, you're not asking. Single player or multiplayer — you know Id, more than any other hardworking developer, won't let you down. Next month, John Carmack talks exclusively to **Next Generation** about the philosophy behind Id's latest game. **NG**



Id is developing maps with sophisticated architecture that won't obstruct the gameplay

ADVENTURE RACING

Stealing a page from *SF Rush*, the *Need For Speed* designers take a road less traveled

Don't expect to see *Need for Speed's* traditional high-performance, stick-to-the-street race cars in this game. *Adventure Racing* (a working title) is all about catching air. Sure, the game is being developed under the scrutiny of the *Need*

"The car that is Herbie" seemed perfect for the wild environments

For Speed designers, but the vehicle EA is planning to feature suggests a radical departure. Their car of choice? The new Volkswagen Beetle.

With the help of Paradigm, this game was developed from scratch for the N64. The designers wanted a car with some personality, and the adventurous flair associated with "the car that is Herbie" seemed perfect for the wild environments the team is designing. Rather than strict, linear courses, the team has developed six expansive 3D areas. As they do in *Rush*, these areas feature multiple tracks, each branching several times to add plenty of replayability. (Even the physics engine and funky music nod to Atari's masterpiece.) There will be many breakable items placed on the tracks, including some crates that hide acceleration power-ups. In order to see everything in the game, players will need to earn cars powerful enough to smash through the barriers that block the access to new areas.

It's not surprising that a game with



Serving as more than just scenery, some levels feature wacky interactive obstacles. Columns will fall in your path, and an offshore pirate ship will shoot cannonballs at you

several similarities to *SF Rush* has come out of the *Need For Speed* group at EA Canada. *Adventure Racing*, like *Rush* and the *NFS* series, already captures those edgy intangibles that urge you to drive faster. Sure, half the fun involves finding and exploring risky shortcuts, but the designers never lose sight of the fact that players must be able to do it at breakneck speed, and the payoff has to be worth it. Though there's still a bit of work left to go before the planned March release, *Adventure Racing* looks like it will nail it.

NG



The six areas include a city, a volcanic isle, an alpine mountain, the English countryside, a forest, and a windswept desert

FORMAT
N64

PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER
EA Canada/Paradigm

RELEASE DATE
March 1999

ORIGIN
U.S.



There will be all kinds of jumps and breakable objects that reveal hidden areas. At press time, the vehicle damage model had yet to be implemented




Only
Eidos
brings
in the
New Year
with a
BANG!



**WARZONE
2100**



**LEGACY of KAIN
SOUL REAVER**



REVENANT



BRAVEHEART



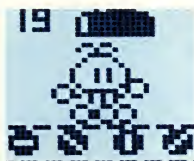
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EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

JUMPING FLASH 3

No word on whether or not it's coming to the U.S. — but in Japan, Sony puts the finishing touches to the third installment of one of the earliest PlayStation titles



The PocketStation aspect is obviously limited, but at least it's integral to the gameplay, and not simply a pocket monster



This is SCEI's first title to support the company's PocketStation, formerly known as the PDA

FORMAT
PlayStation

PUBLISHER
SCEI

DEVELOPER
SCEI

RELEASE DATE
December 23 (Japan)

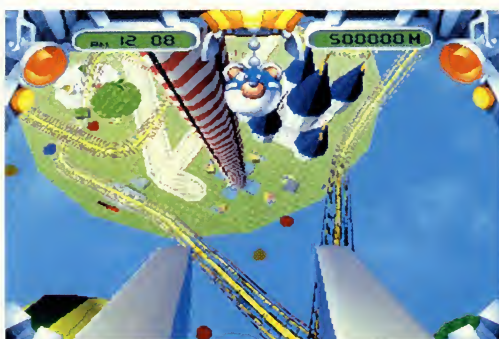
ORIGIN
Japan

The two existing *Jumping Flash* titles have been much overlooked by gamers. A shame, really, because both are very enjoyable titles, as well as being the only current representatives of the severely under-used first-person platformer genre.

Called Pocket Muumuu in Japan, where it is the first PlayStation title to feature PocketStation support, the game sees Robit making his third appearance in a crisper, more colorful form than ever before, even if the graphical structure remains faithful to the first two episodes.

Your goal is to construct a theme park. In order to achieve this relatively straightforward task, money must be collected during bonus stages so that new, better rides can fill the park.

PocketStation owners, however, have the opportunity to gather extra coins. By visiting special shops in the game, special sub-games can be downloaded to Sony's diminutive LCD-screened plastic pendant so that you can help Robit in his quest — even when away from the PlayStation nestling under your television. Once the PocketStation is reunited with its bigger brother, points earned from playing the sub-games on the subway, in parks, or on the beach are converted into coins, which can buy more attractions for the theme park.



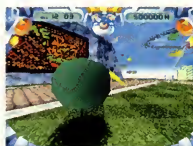
As the theme park owner, you can have as many turns on the rides as you wish. And the more money you make, the bigger the attractions become

The action in the game evolves according to a 24-hour clock, and in addition to a variety of minigames, there are items to collect and, of course, numerous enemies to dispatch.

Understandably, Sony is keen to emphasize the potential PocketStation can bring to games, and in its current form, *Jumping Flash 3* seems like a worthy ambassador for the format.

It will be interesting to see what gameplay additions Sony can come up with.

NG



Though your main goal is to build a theme park, there will be minigames. A look at these screens tells us there's probably still some jumping involved



Only Eidos challenges
your imagination!



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EIDOS
INTERACTIVE

STAR TREK: NEW WORLDS

Interplay boldly brings *Star Trek* somewhere it hasn't gone before — to realtime strategy



Unlike previous videogame interpretations of the "Star Trek" license, *New Worlds* features a clean interface that doesn't hinder the action



With a raft of new planets to explore (and potentially conquer), expect a bundle of varied landscape styles

Look for the red stamp on these images around here — that shows that they've been approved by Paramount in the States for use in the game," says Bob Wade, team leader at Binary Asylum, gesturing towards three office walls plastered with sketches, renders, and general ephemera relating to the evergreen *Star Trek* phenomenon. Even to the hardest of hardcore *Star Trek* fan, though, most of these elements are new — Binary Asylum has engineered them almost from scratch.

"You can tell from the amount of ground-based vehicles that this is completely new territory," says Wade, "but the cooperation we've had from Paramount in breaking that new ground has been superb."

Star Trek: New Worlds is set in 2292. In the Neutral Zone — a quiet area of space situated more or less equidistant between Federation, Romulan, and Klingon territories — where a spatial anomaly has created a clutch of fresh new worlds. Each of the three races is keen to explore these fledgling planets, although their motivations differ considerably: the Federation, of course, is motivated by science to investigate the phenomenon behind their birth, while the Klingons are in it for honor and riches. Whichever of the three races gamers choose, the game offers 25 levels of realtime construction and conflict over the varied terrain styles offered by the new planets.

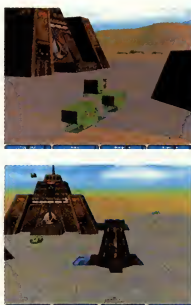


Binary Asylum believes *Star Trek: New Worlds* to be a significant step forward for PC strategy games. The polygonal worlds play a big part

Gone are the clichéd Starship bridges seen in previous *Star Trek* titles; in their place is an elegant, easy-to-use interface that makes the manipulation of game elements a relative breeze.

And, if Binary Asylum's claims are to be believed, it's not just a case of nudging a bunch of troops around a map while maintaining factories — there's much more to it than that.

"The difference from most existing strategy games is that it has a great deal more background stuff going on," says Wade. "It's not just a huge armada of tanks up against another guy with a huge armada of tanks — there's more complexity to the gameplay, more plot interaction, more character development — just a lot more depth than people are



Commanding individual units is obviously a key aspect of gameplay. Each element is cleanly rendered and distinctive

FORMAT
PC

PUBLISHER
Interplay

DEVELOPER
Binary Asylum

RELEASE DATE
Q2 1999

ORIGIN
U.K.



Just about every structural element of the game has been created by Binary Asylum's designers in conjunction with Paramount staff in the U.S.

used to in this kind of strategy title."

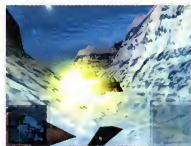
The 3D environments of the game give it a feel like no other game of this ilk. The attention to detail probably contributes significantly here, too. After selecting a structure to build, units appear and actually create them, panel by panel, in realtime. It really does make a difference — especially when you realize that your resources don't match your ambition, leaving a semi-constructed building looking a sorry sight among your otherwise perfectly realized developments (which can include Hydroponics Bays and Photon Artillery Launchers, among many others).

Polygon-generated vehicles inhabit the 3D universe of *Star Trek: New Worlds*, and, in keeping with the team's vision, they're all new and unique to the *Star Trek* series. Federation Phaser Tanks, Klingon Mobile Disruptor Batteries, and Romulan Tanks are only a handful of the craft in the game, and they all retain the familiar design values of their respective races, albeit in ground-based form. They retain some of their space-based counterparts' capabilities, too — Romulans have access to Cloaking Tanks, for example.

"What you are not seeing up on the walls here is the character interaction within the game," says Wade. "We don't want to give too much away — there is a very strong element of characters in there. You know, you effectively have a crew throughout the game. It's probably not giving too much away to say that it doesn't feature the original crew in a mission-by-mission basis; you are going



"We've come up with a lot of ideas," says Binary Asylum Director Bob Wade, "and Paramount will say, 'Well, yes, the Klingons would have something like that' or, 'That's the wrong look.' So it's been really interesting having to create a huge amount of imagery from very little that has previously appeared"



to have your own crew effectively from scratch, but part of that crew develops and whether or not they survive is pretty much under your control. There will be a very strong character element in there."

While commanding a crew, you'll have to deal with their development over time, making command decisions that might well call for the expenditure of a number of red-sweatered individuals — but it may be that Binary Asylum is able to get away from the classic *Star Trek* anonymity of "supporting" crew members, an achievement that would be some feat indeed.

There's little doubt that the team behind *Star Trek: New Worlds* has the horsepower to make it work as a game in its own right — it's the new ground Binary Asylum is looking to break that will be the litmus test. All will become clear later in 1999....

NG



Although the emphasis is very much on strategy, expect plenty of explosions



These shots come from a 3D-accelerated version, but a software version should also be available

GT WORLD TOUR

After the well-received *Top Gear Rally*, Boss Games returns to road racing with a vengeance



The polished texture design of *Top Gear Rally* returns for *World Tour*

We don't want to be as extreme as *Gran Turismo*," says Rob Povey, Boss Games' technical director, about the developer's upcoming Nintendo 64 racer. Povey wants *GT World Tour* to be immediately playable, yet offer the depth of *Gran Turismo*. "We're aiming for something that is much more arcade-like," he continues, "but still retains the realistic feel of Sony's game."

Not an easy task by any means, but Boss has proven that it possesses the technical abilities to pull off such feats—specifically with the release of *Top Gear Rally*. When launched last year, the visually impressive racer featured a multitude of clean textures, smoothly drawn 3D tracks, and a tight control scheme that surpassed all other Nintendo 64 driving games. A year later, *Top Gear Rally* remains one of the



Boss Games is using everything from dynamic lighting to spectacular highlighting effects on cars

console's best racers despite the genre's saturation.

But *GT World Tour* is not a sequel.

"It's a completely different game," explains Povey. "The idea is that it's got to

"We're aiming for something that is much more arcade-like [than *Gran Turismo*]."

Rob Povey, technical director, Boss Games

be easy enough to get into that you can actually play it. So you don't have to spend the first two hours driving around a track crashing."

Unlike *Top Gear*'s off-road, mud-covered tracks, *GT World Tour* features smooth, paved surfaces perfect for strategic power-slides. To support this new gameplay dynamic, Boss has written an entirely new game engine with tighter code and a more realistic physics model. The results are impressive. The early version that *Next Generation* saw hummed along at a solid framerate with more than 15 extremely detailed vehicles racing onscreen at once. By comparison, *Top Gear Rally* managed a meager three.

The game features a selection of 32



World Tour aims to be *Gran Turismo*, minus the tedious details associated with hardcore driving simulations. That idea is to give gamers a realistic driving game without taking them to boring extremes

FORMAT
Nintendo 64

PUBLISHER
Midway

DEVELOPER
Boss Games

RELEASE DATE
March '99

ORIGIN
U.S.



GT World Tour utilizes an optional high-resolution letterbox mode without the use of Nintendo's 4MB Expansion Pak



unlicensed vehicles that range from Porsches to Mustang look-alikes and everything in between. Each car sports its own unique strengths and weaknesses, with standard variations in top speed, acceleration, and handling. Races take place on 10 different tracks based in locations around the world including Las Vegas; Seattle; Rome; Hawaii; France; New Zealand; Kyoto, Japan; Sydney, Australia; Lisbon, Portugal; and Zurich. Additionally, there are 180 course variations such as mirrored and backward.

World Tour boasts several



The detail and realism in *GT World Tour's* vehicle models take the N64 to the next level



The enhanced engine enables more than 15 vehicles on-screen at once with little drop in framerates

multiplayer options, including a two-player, split-screen cooperative mode in which players drive on a team and accumulate experience points that enable them to acquire faster vehicles. According to Povey, even the two-player game enables up to 16 vehicles to be onscreen at once with no slowdown.

Boss plans to include a letterbox high-resolution mode for *World Tour* and one bonus track that runs in full 640 x

A selection of 32 unlicensed vehicles range from Porsche to Mustang look-alikes

480. Surprisingly though, the developer will not make use of Nintendo's 4MB Expansion Pak.

"I'm really concerned that the 4MB Pak is going to end up becoming a selling point," Povey says, "which means we have to come up with some way of using it even if it makes no sense."

GT World Tour, which is still subject to a title change before its release, should ship on a 16MB cart this March. Given Boss' technical expertise and appetite for driving games, it's likely to be the closest thing Nintendo 64 owners see to *Gran Turismo*. And at the very least, says Povey, "It's going to be better than *GT 64* — I can guarantee you that."

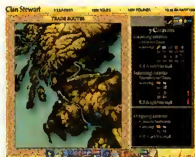
NG



Boss puts their significant technical expertise to full use in *GT World Tour*

BRAVEHEART

In the hands of a Scottish developer, William Wallace's legacy transcends the movie screen



Diplomacy, troop management, and attacks are planned via 2D maps and menus

Realtime hybrids are the way of future. Hits like *Zelda*, *Diablo*, and *Tomb Raider* have successfully combined realtime action with traditional RPG and adventure elements. Now, Eidos and Red Lemon have paired turn-based strategy and realtime strategy for *Braveheart*.

"*Braveheart* is very much a political, military, empire-building game," says Eidos Associate Producer Eric Adams. Based on the film, players take on the role of William Wallace (or one of 14 other clan leaders) to unite Scotland and ultimately conquer all of England. To achieve this goal, players must manage resources and diplomacy, as well successfully defeat enemies in strategic realtime 3D battles. Eidos Producer Darren Hedges explains that the diplomacy and resource management are controlled from a 2D map of the English isle, while battles are fought on large 3D maps.

"Basically you have a 10-kilometer square battle area," says Hedges, "you can be attacking a major citadel or castle at one point and attacking its trade route in another part of the map. In effect, it's two battles going on simultaneously in one area."

In an attempt to stay true to the film, epic battles feature up to 700 characters fighting at the same time. Shorus Wallace, battle choreographer for the film and direct descendant of William Wallace, is



The powerful game camera enables players to zoom in close to see *Braveheart's* signature limb-splitting sword fights



lending his expertise to Red Lemon.

"You can have multiple formations," says Adams of the game's historical accuracy. "You can place archers behind your foot soldiers, you can set your pikemen up to deflect a cavalry charge."

Adams also mentions that the cavalry were actually motion-captured, and that players can use siege equipment, such as catapults, battering rams, and siege towers. Sneaky tactics at the player's disposal include laying down hidden tar traps on the battlefield, and sending spies into enemy camps. To keep replayability high, the game will randomize resources and treaties for every new single player game. Multiplayer modes will even enable player to take the role of the British. A P200 will be required to run the game, but 3D hardware won't be.

And will other pieces of the film make their way into the game? According to Red Lemon's Andy Campbell, you'll be able to taunt your enemy with a classic lifting of the kilt — now that's freedom.

NG



The camera enables players viewing distances of up to 21 scale kilometers. The true-3D terrain is dotted with cathedrals, castles, villages, slopes, and rises



FORMAT
PC

DEVELOPER
Eidos

DEVELOPER
Red Lemon Studios

RELEASE DATE
Q1 1999

ORIGIN
Scotland

DARKSTONE

Sure, it looks suspiciously like a big hit from last year, but Delphine's latest action RPG has a trick or two of its own

It controls like *Diablo*, most of the interface screens look like *Diablo*, and it even *sounds* more than a bit like *Diablo*. Yet at the same time, Delphine's *Darkstone* will offer just a bit more than Westwood's highly popular dungeon crawl.

To begin with, rather than the sprite-based heroes and enemies of *Diablo*, *Darkstone* is fully 3D, and you can zoom in and out and rotate around with no loss of character resolution. Although it should be noted that the models aren't the highest polygon count we've ever seen, they look just fine, even up close.

Also, while it could be argued that *Diablo* was an action game with RPG elements, *Darkstone* appears to be much more an RPG with action elements. There are a large number of sub-quests and unique or mystical items to recover and bring to various nonplayer characters (although the overall goal seems a little nebulous). Even with the single-player game, you can have a "party" of two, trading off the lead between them at will.

There are some problems: The interface could use some tweaking, and the secondary character's pathfinding AI often blocks the lead character's access to doorways. When bargaining with shopkeepers, for example, it's necessary to quit the shop screen, switch characters, then click on the shopkeeper

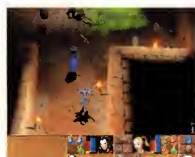


Although not exactly a special effects showcase, *Darkstone* manages a few pyrotechnics

again — mildly irksome. Also, while it's gratifying that spells function more like standard RPG spells than simple projectile weapons (like in *Diablo*), healing and other "defensive" spells can only affect the person casting them.

Despite a few shortcomings, the beta we looked at was as addictive as any other dungeon crawl we've slithered through. Yes, it's close enough to a *Diablo* clone that the similarities can't be overlooked, but it seems as if *Darkstone* will offer enough unique details of its own to satisfy your cravings while waiting for *Diablo 2*.

NG



***Darkstone* feels more like a "regular" RPG than it does an action game**



One advantage of being fully in 3D is that you can zoom in as close as you want

FORMAT
PC

PUBLISHER
Take 2

DEVELOPER
Delphine Software

RELEASE DATE
April 1999

ORIGIN
France

PANDEMIC

STUDIOS

With the *Battlezone* and *Dark Reign* teams ready to leave the company, Activision faced a potentially messy mutiny. But by embracing change and backing the new studio, Activision may ensure some surefire sequels

"For a long time, we had been talking about how it was inevitable that some of our top talent was going to leave"

Pandemic President Josh Resnick

Even in its short history, the game industry has begun to repeat itself. Nowhere is the irony more evident than in the birth of Pandemic Studios. Before leaving to form Pandemic, Andrew Goldman and Josh Resnick were Activision employees, a company formed 20 years ago from the exodus of four Atari designers/programmers. While Atari paid dearly for the loss, Activision seems to have learned from its parent's mistakes. Recognizing the needs and concerns of its creative talent, Activision has supported (and funded) the birth of Pandemic, the company born out of the *Battlezone* and *Dark Reign* development teams.

"For a long time," says Pandemic President Josh Resnick, "we had been talking about how it was inevitable that some of our top talent was going to want to leave [Activision] and strike out on their own. So instead of them having to go to our competitors, it made sense for



Pandemic's door is open for business, but President Josh Resnick (left) and CEO Andrew Goldman rarely find the time to hang on it

BATTLEZONE SEQUEL

FORMAT
PC

RELEASE DATE
Late summer 1999

Oddly, the sequel to *Battlezone* may not be called *Battlezone* as Activision's license on the property may run out, and Hasbro has recently purchased the classic *Battlezone* name. Although it was critically lauded, *Battlezone* for the PC wasn't the out-of-

the-gate hit the team expected it to be. George Collins, designer of last year's *Battlezone*, has joined Pandemic to direct the sequel.

"We have a team that's proven and gameplay that's proven," Collins says, explaining that they want to make the sequel more accessible to those unfamiliar with the budding genre. "We're improving the interface," he continues, "making the graphics great again and making the multiplayer even better than before."

All of this means that beginners will have access to vehicles that are easier to control, and the team is refining the physics and AI for ease of use. "The AI didn't work the way people wanted it to," Collins confesses, "that forced people to micromanage things and kept the game from being as simple



Expect greater variety between the different planetary surfaces, and lush terrain for each



New lighting tricks will also be put to good use

us to embrace it."

At that time, Resnick had just finished directing *Dark Reign*, and *Battlezone* Director Andrew Goldman had begun discussions with Activision to move the *Battlezone* team out of house. Activision asked Resnick to help negotiate the deal with Goldman on behalf of Activision.

"But he was too good a negotiator on Activision's side," says Goldman, "so I had to co-opt him first."

One morning at a business breakfast, Goldman asked Resnick to join him.

"I was very, very loyal," says Resnick, "I had had a good experience at Activision, and I was happy with what I was doing."

Yet Goldman planted the seed, and Resnick was hooked. "I immediately told Activision that I was now switching sides," Resnick says, "I didn't want it to be a conflict of interest. And I knew they had a really positive attitude about this whole kind of transition."

At that point, Resnick and Goldman thought it might make sense to bring more than one project out with them, and as Resnick had worked on *Dark Reign*, "the one that made the most sense was *Dark Reign II*," he says. "Activision saw how the synergies would make sense from technology, design, and management standpoints."



Just as four left Atari to form Activision, these four left Activision to start Pandemic

After securing a five-

title deal, the newly formed Pandemic, with Resnick as President and Goldman as CEO, packed up and headed West — a whole five miles to the other side of Santa Monica. Pandemic now inhabits an open, rustic office with high ceilings and exposed beams. (Until recently, the space belonged to Pulse Entertainment, creators of *Bad Mojo* for the PC, but Pulse vacated the building after their messy merger with 7th Level to form a web-tools company.) Currently, all 19 Pandemic employees are focused on the *Battlezone* sequel and *Dark Reign II*.

In order to enable Pandemic to hit the ground running, Activision allowed them to bring over the existing *Battlezone* engine and all the current work on *Dark Reign II*. Of course,



The tanks and ships feature a sleek new look, and you can bet the weapon effects will be equally enhanced

as it should have been."

Instead of throwing all the action and strategy elements at people at once, the game will let players to drive around and get used to the world, and then lead into the strategy elements. "But we're not dumbing it down," insists Goldman, "it's just better design."

Better design that also enables players to move squads of units at a time and incorporates more of the fantastic



storyline. "We're continuing with the secret space conspiracy," Collins explains, "We're moving up the time period to present day." Of course, the Soviets and the Americans will still be battling it out on planets across the solar system for "scrap," the mysterious alien resource, and Goldman hints that the origin of scrap may be revealed in the sequel. Contact with alien races? Pandemic isn't saying yet. Our guess — absolutely.



George Collins, director of the *Battlezone* sequel, designed last year's release



Activision will retain some rights to the technology Pandemic creates.

"It doesn't bother me at all," says Goldman, "because we'll still be pushing ahead. The only time we run into trouble with that is if they try to take work we've done and release it before we get to release it."

Just as *Battlezone* borrowed some AI code from *Dark Reign*, you can bet the code-sharing is continuing at Pandemic. "It's hugely beneficial," Goldman stresses, as finished code can be rewritten in a far more timely fashion.

AI code, pathfinding code, and graphics engines have been shared across both projects. "But their code bases are completely separate," Goldman says, "they're doing two separate engines but with some common elements."

And as they both are very different games, the sequels will go in slightly different directions. Both Goldman and Resnick believe they've found the

perfect action/strategy formula for *Battlezone*, and are intent on simply polishing up the game experience. With *Dark Reign*, Pandemic feels the need to experiment with the classic realtime strategy formula, in order to further distinguish it from the *Command & Conquer* and *Total Annihilation* franchises.

With both games

scheduled for release later this year, has Pandemic thought about what the teams will be doing next? Goldman mentions that Pandemic would like to eventually create and own some of their own intellectual properties, and Resnick mentions Activision's recent acquisition of the new *Star Trek* franchise as one of the more enticing properties in the corporate catalog. "We have plans," says Resnick of projects three and four, "we just haven't approached Activision."

Hey, whenever they're ready — it's their company now.

NG

DARK REIGN II

FORMAT
PC

RELEASE DATE
Fall

To the casual observer, the original *Dark Reign* didn't look like much more than another C&C clone. But with strong attention to detail, the game delivered a consuming experience that separated it from the pack and earned it a four-star review. In the sequel, Pandemic plans to spruce up the original's solid gameplay with a stunning new look.

"We're putting in a brand-new 3D engine," says Director Greg Borrud, "it's fully 3D — it's 3D terrain, it's 3D units, it's 3D trees, it's 3D rocks."

Three of the original *Dark Reign* programmers left Australian co-developer Auron and have been working at Pandemic on the new engine for about nine months. Borrud, who produced the

original *Dark Reign* at Activision, explains that the new engine features "true-scale 3D." For example, a larger mech will proportionately dwarf an individual soldier. This enables players to intuitively differentiate units and understand their effectiveness. No longer will a single soldier be able to chip away and destroy a base or building.

Of course, Borrud explains, the team is also dedicated to pushing gameplay enhancements, further advancing the deep unit control of the original. He mentions that the team will be doing more to develop the single-player's plot and characters, and multiplayer tests are already running with 11 players. Expect to see it sometime in late summer or fall.



A powerful engine with a scalable camera enables players to get up close and personal with their units



Greg Borrud is directing *Dark Reign II*, and the salon chair is his, really



In "true-scale 3D" soldier units (above) are realistically proportionate to vehicles and larger weapons of war. Even from the traditional overhead view, (left) *Dark Reign II*'s new 3D engine stands out

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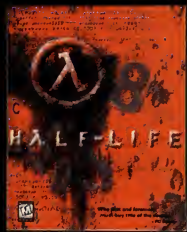
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CONQUEST

Digital Anvil's entry into the RTS world looks to offer a refreshing change: Actual innovation in the genre



Battles occur on a 2D plane, although at times ships will move up or down to maneuver around one another and small fighters will attack from all sides. Battles between two fleets can incorporate dozens of ships, capturing the feeling of naval combat



Digital Anvil is taking care to incorporate numerous 3D explosions

Rarely has a genre been as bound by the limitations of its pioneers as has realtime strategy. Even *Total Annihilation*, the best of the RTS game currently available, offers only evolutionary changes beyond the conventions set by *Dune 2* and *Command & Conquer*. Enter Digital Anvil and Microsoft. Thanks to the latter's deep pockets (and the refreshing willingness to take risks in the Games Group) and the former's level of experience, *Conquest* should be one of next year's brighter lights in realtime strategy.

Although the plot is nothing special — fight it out in space as one of four races (the well-balanced humans, the slow-but-powerful reptiles, the initially-weak-but-strong-if-you-can-survive energy beings, and the weak-but-plentiful insectoids) — the play mechanics and scope of the game mark *Conquest* as a real contender. Unlike the bulk of RTS games, in which all the action

occurs on a single battlefield, the fighting in the space-based *Conquest* can occur across as many as 16 star systems simultaneously.

"We wanted gameplay to resemble the carrier warfare of *World War II*," explains Producer Erin Roberts. "Finding the enemy first, and then launching the first strike was highly important to gain the advantage. For this to work, we needed a large playing field, and rather than giving players one map, we decided to enable them to play over all these different systems at once." Plus, adds Roberts, "The huge amount of playing space really makes it feel like they are taking over the galaxy." Systems are linked with hyperspace jump gates (easy places for ambushes, by the way), and come in all different sizes, although each has at least one planet which can be colonized or mined. Combat, appropriately, is fleet based.

This single ambitious innovation



Battles can occur around planets (top) or in deep space (above)

FORMAT
PC

PUBLISHER
Digital Anvil

DEVELOPER
Microsoft

RELEASE DATE
Summer 1999

ORIGIN
U.S.



The interface takes some getting used to, but DA is confident that once you do, you'll find using it second nature



Graphic design in the game follows the emerging Digital Anvil style

"We wanted the gameplay to resemble the carrier warfare of World War II ... launching the first strike is important"

Erin Roberts, Producer, Digital Anvil

dramatically increases the scope and depth of the game, and has led to a number of other necessary innovations, most importantly in AI. While battles (and building, and resource mining) occurring in multiple systems simultaneously is certainly appropriate for a game of galactic conquest, it might be hard for

resource collection and manufacturing anywhere in the galaxy from one window, and can jump instantly to hotspots anywhere on the 16 maps.

Although early in its development, *Conquest's* potential is clear. Commanding all the forces in the galaxy should be nothing new to most players, but managing multiple battles simultaneously (and making tough decisions such as stripping one system of defenses to shore up a battle elsewhere), should add a new challenge to the game. Led by Stuart Moulder, Microsoft's strategy group has shown great willingness to experiment in the RTS genre, and the results speak for themselves: The well-received *Close Combat* and the excellent *Age of Empires*. If DA can deliver on its promises with *Conquest*, Microsoft may discover that the third time is a charm as well.

NG



Production facilities are located in stationary equatorial orbits

one person to manage in realtime. Hence, DA developed the Fleet Admiral, possibly one of the most ambitious cooperative AI constructs ever attempted. "Fleet Admirals command a set of ships," says Roberts, "and they gain experience and effectiveness as they accumulate successful combat engagements." In short, to be able to expand past your home system with confidence, you need to trust your Fleet Admirals, and that means delegating ships to them early, so they can gain experience. In large part, the success or failure of the *Conquest* will depend on whether or not the Fleet Admirals work successfully.

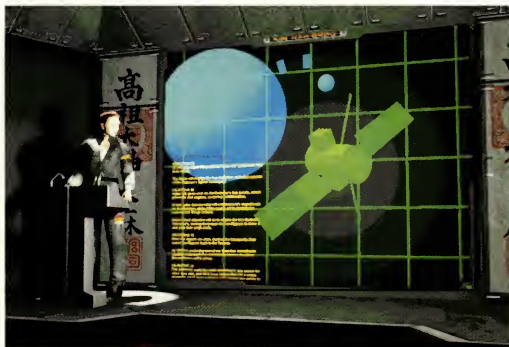
Because of the ambitious nature of the game's innovations, Digital Anvil is keen to make sure the game's interface is as familiar as possible to players. So, for instance, while all objects in the game are 3D, combat occurs on the familiar 2D plane. Also, special care is being taken to make the system-to-system navigation as easy as possible. Players can, for instance, manage



Getting swarmed during battle can create a real feeling of tension — do you bring in reinforcements, or sacrifice the entire fleet?

STARLANCER

It's the game everyone expected from Digital Anvil, but that doesn't mean it won't be good



The story is driven in part by dramatic FMV briefings (above). Actual combat (top right) will look familiar to *Wing Commander* fans



3D interface screens are nothing new, but at least they're well done in *Starlancer*

When Chris Roberts and company left Origin, most people expected that once he finished the *Wing Commander* movie, he would proceed to release another *Wing Commander*-style game. It should come as no surprise, then, that one of the four projects recently announced by DA is a space flight-sim with plenty of FMV story.

Set in Earth's near future, China, the countries of the Middle East, and the remnants of Russia's empire have launched a devastating sneak attack and captured most of the solar system from the over-stretched Alliance (the former NATO powers). With only a few outposts at the edge of the solar system, the Alliance is engaged in a desperate fight to avoid being wiped out. "The player is a civilian who signs on the carrier *Reliant* to fight for the Alliance in their darkest hour," says Producer Erin Roberts.

Nice back story, but will it actually be a good game? Roberts says yes and points to a number of innovations DA is making in the genre. "Missions are going to be very different and flexible, so it won't feel like you're just patrolling a bunch of nav points, or that you have no effect on the game outside your single mission."

Perhaps the biggest innovation will be the multiplayer mode, which enables players to play the whole game in cooperation with up to seven other



The game is designed to capture the desperate battles of WWII's Pacific theater, and it shows in the graphic design of the ships

players. It's great, says Roberts, because "you and a bunch of friends can share the experience, receive promotions, and even gain command over each other while fighting through the campaign."

Digital Anvil staffers practically created this genre, and it's biggest weakness has always been maintaining the balance between gameplay and story. If the company can successfully produce a fun game to go along with a storyline that's already very compelling, Microsoft may find its investment in the company amply rewarded.

NE



The ship is amazingly well rendered, making the story sequences feel even more real

FORMAT
PC

PUBLISHER
Digital Anvil

DEVELOPER
Microsoft

RELEASE DATE
TBA

ORIGIN
U.S.

GUARDIAN'S CRUSADE

Activision's quest for more console titles turns up an unusually promising RPG

First shown at Tokyo Game Show Spring '98 — where it was then known as *Knight and Baby* — Activision's second acquisition of a Japanese-developed title in recent months looks to

Although it's not role-playing as usual, this isn't being touted as a reinvention of the genre

flesh out the publisher's console lineup as its first and only role-playing offering for PlayStation. Developed by Tamsot, best known for *Battle Arena Toshiden*, the now-retitled *Guardian's Crusade* may just be the springboard Activision needs to gain acceptance in a category which, up until recently, was the near-exclusive stomping grounds of the monolithic Square Soft.

Guardian's Crusade casts players as a young knight on a quest to unravel the mysterious past of his companion, a baby monster. The game's pastel-colored exterior belies what promises to be unusually deep and innovative gameplay. Rather than adhering to the traditional role-playing formula of experience points and levels, the game relies on a unique teacher/student relationship between the young adventurer and his tiny sidekick, which, as a result of the player's interactions with it, can transform into any of 14 specially fitted forms to aid in battle.

In addition to this unique system, the game promises an intriguing cast of what



The game features more than 30 unique battlefields using dynamic camera angles and brilliant special effects to heighten the drama

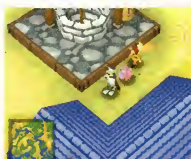


CG and game engine elements are used to seamlessly transition from storyline to battle

Activision has termed "living toys"—additional sidekicks, each with a special ability, that can be summoned into battle to defend, heal, and fight alongside the player. This arsenal is further enhanced by the inclusion of a wide array of spells, weapons, armor types, and magic items.

Although it's not role playing as usual, this game isn't being touted as a complete reinvention of the genre. Activision promises plenty of puzzles, sub-quests, and turn-based battles to keep the title familiar and accessible to fans of the category's more traditional representatives.

NG



There's no shortage of towns, but once you leave, enemies are lurking everywhere



The player is further aided by an arsenal of wind-up "living toys," such as a pint-size cheerleader that serves as a moral booster in battle



FORMAT
PlayStation

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Tamsot

RELEASE DATE
March 1999

ORIGIN
Japan

DRAGON VALOR

Namco looks to the past for the inspiration behind its latest action RPG

FORMAT
PlayStation

PUBLISHER
Namco

DEVELOPER
Namco

RELEASE DATE
Spring 1999 (Japan)

ORIGIN
Japan

In 1986, Namco released a coin-op called *Dragon Buster*. A weird mix of *Wonder-Boy*-style platform antics and basic RPG elements (i.e. talking to the occasional damsel in distress), it was by no means a classic but remains an interesting attempt to do something new with a genre that was widely overrepresented at the time. Namco obviously see the game as some kind of watermark, as it appeared again on the *Namco Museum Volume 2* CD and is now the inspiration for a 3D update.

Like its predecessor, *Dragon Valor* mixes action with RPG-style puzzle solving and character development. Cast as the Dragon Slayer, you fight your way through a succession of dungeon, town, and forest levels, facing huge dragon bosses to clear each stage. Each dragon requires a different approach to defeat, and as a result, players will spend the bulk of each stage collecting the



Dragon Valor is a fully 3D title, blending RPG elements with action





The end-of-level dragon bosses look stunning, and each must be killed using unique magical weapons and tactics



magical items and power-ups necessary to make the battles easier. The emphasis is on action for the most part, and the dragons look truly formidable, using much of the PlayStation's now seemingly waning polygon power.

Progression depends on more than killing dragons, however. Though Namco hasn't confirmed PocketStation compatibility for *Dragon Valor*, it seems almost inevitable. After clearing each stage, the player retires and marries, leaving his offspring to continue the quest. The style and powers of the new character — and the plot of the next stage — are determined by which damsel the Dragon-Slayer decides to take as his bride, which adds a

Tamagotchi-style element to the game. Dubbed the "Descendant Transmission System" (or, as we call it here, sex), Namco hopes this unique feature will bring an added dimension to the title and give RPG fans a bit more than the usual mix of swords and sorcery.

Namco U.S. is keeping quiet about *Dragon Valor*, anticipating a late '99 rollout following what it feels will be considerable success in Japan. If the mix of action and RPG works — and the game avoids the usual trap of falling between two posts — then PlayStation owners may have more to look forward to from Namco than their highly anticipated driving and fighting sequels.

NG



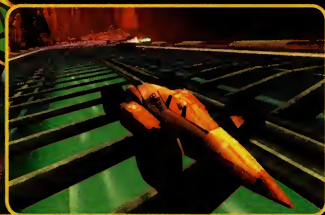
Rich and varied environments make for absorbing exploration



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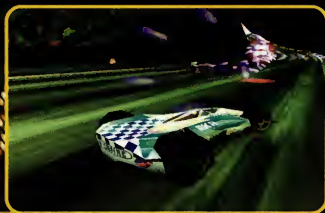
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MILESTONES

Next Generation's monthly update on tomorrow's games

If winter is truly the season of our discontent, it's only because we've finished with those fantastic holiday releases and now must replay them again and again. Fortunately, the thaw

should bring us another crop of eagerly anticipated releases. And with *Drakan* and *Homeworld* leading the pack, PC owners will get the best that innovative designers have to offer.

DRAKAN: ORDER OF THE FLAME PC



Drakan: Order of the Flame continues to impress the Next Generation staff. These latest shots show off the multiplayer mode, in which players can ride a new skeletal dragon and use a new lightning attack. We just can't decide whether to call them dogfights or deathmatches.

WAR: FINAL ASSAULT Arcade



Midway takes first-person shooters into the arcade this March. *War* boasts single- and multiplayer modes.

CONTENDER



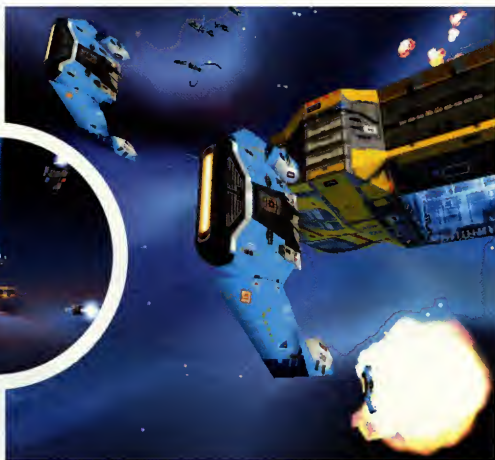
After *Knockout Kings*, we can only hope this PlayStation boxing game without real fighters offers real gameplay

ELIMINATOR



This PlayStation title reminds us of the old Psygnosis, with flashy graphics, great music, and questionable gameplay

HOMEWORLD PC



"Remember when you were a kid, and games were really fun?" says Relic CEO Alex Garden. Garden does, and this fully 3D, realtime strategy game is one he hopes will recapture the glory of well-tested gameplay. Although, to look at these gorgeous screens of *Homeworld*, you'd think the emphasis was on the graphics

R4 PlayStation



Next to *Tekken*, the *Ridge Racer* series is the poster child for PlayStation longevity — better graphics, longer tracks, and over 300 cars

RIDGE RACER 60fps PlayStation



Look familiar? Packaged with *R4* will be the original *Ridge Racer*, now enhanced to run at 60fps and amazingly, in hi-res as well

ARMY MEN 2



In this sequel, 3DO has taken their toy green men into the real world

CIVILIZATION:
CALL TO POWER

Not Sid Meier's, but worth a look. This PC CIV is an internal Activision project

DUNGEON KEEPER 2 PC



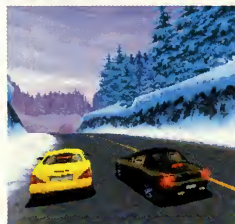
Bullfrog's sequel (sans Molyneux) is shaping up for a summer release, with a new engine and some new first-person game mechanics

CARMAGEDDON 2 PC



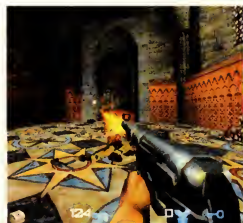
Over-the-top violence is once again the staple gameplay diet in this sequel to *Carmageddon*. Stainless Software brings back its "combat-racing/killing pedestrians" formula with improvements that include polygonal characters, and some fantastic physics and damage models

NEED FOR SPEED 4 PlayStation



The fourth PlayStation installment of EA Canada's road epic is warming up just in time for spring. Like *R4*, expect some graphical enhancements

MORTYR PC



While that update of *Wolfenstein 3D* may never come, Mirage Media brings you close by letting you travel back in time to battle Nazis in WW2

LOONEY TUNES SPACE RACE



This N64 title takes kart racing out this world, as Bugs, Daffy, Wile E. Coyote and Tweety race to stop Marvin the martian. Cute.

V-RALLY



More N64 Rally racing courtesy of Infogrames: 11 cars, 40 tracks, 8 locales, and some decent driving. Available in March

ROLLCAGE PlayStation



1 OF 3
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When developer ATD brought this racing-combat title to the Next Generation offices, a line formed behind the controller. Fantastic weaponry, destructible environments, and cars that players drive on the ceilings are just a few of the features. Why the hype? Tight control and great gameplay separate it from the wannabes

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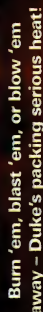
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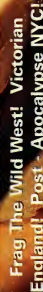
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THE FIFTY BEST GAMES OF ALL TIME



YOU DON'T HAVE TO AGREE WITH US, BUT YOU'D BE WRONG NOT TO

By *Next Generation's* estimation, more than 100,000 computer and video games have been created since Steve Russell's seminal *Space War!* first flickered to life on a PDP-1 computer screen at MIT 37 years ago. Of that number, the average *Next Generation* reader can probably remember a few hundred off the top of their head, and probably 1,500 if they take the time to try to write them down. The list of truly great games, however, is much smaller.

More than two years ago, in issue 21, *Next Generation* published the definitive list (at the time) of the top 100 computer and video games. Because picking the top 100 only took about 25 hours of heated debate, we decided to make things tougher on ourselves this time around and narrow the list down to the top 50. This required increasing the debate time by only 10 hours (we'd like to take this time to apologize to the facilities department for the damage to the conference room).

We're pleased to say that nearly 50% of the entries on the following pages weren't released at the time of our last list. Although it sometimes seems that the pace of innovation in the game industry is woefully slow, the past two years, in addition to an ever-increasing flood of clones and also-rans, have seen the release of some of the best titles we've ever had the privilege of playing.

Once again, the criteria for admission to the list was stringent.

Historical significance was important, but the bottom line was gameplay. We asked ourselves, if we were given a room with every computer and video game in it, which were the 50 games we'd still be playing after the nostalgia or novelty wore off? So, for instance, while the idea of playing *BC's Quest for Tires* on ColecoVision is certainly appealing, the bottom line was that we'd rather play *Half-Life*.

The ultimate criteria for inclusion on the list was: Would we want to

play this game today? This caused some upsets, where derivative games beat out innovators, but we stand by these decisions. For example, *Total Annihilation* made the final cut, but *Command & Conquer* didn't; *Command & Conquer* may have come first, but *Total Annihilation* is a better game, and we'd rather play it. In a list of the top 100, there might be a place for *C&C*, but in a group half that size, even some venerable titles must be dispatched.

Other surprises include the number of games that slipped way down or off the list entirely. Two years is a long time, and some games that enthralled us then have now been eclipsed, while others have simply not aged well. The most striking example was *Super Bomberman 2* — it was at number 3 in our top 100 but fell so far it nearly didn't make the cut. And, for the record, Interplay's gritty, post-apocalyptic *Wasteland* and its spiritual successor *Fallout* came in at 51.

Once again, we cheated slightly by grouping series of games as one entry (this prevents *Mario* and *Zelda* from dominating the top 10). Some games we felt are sequels in all but name (like *Warcraft* and *StarCraft*) were also grouped. For games that are available on a number of platforms, we've only noted the ones we consider worth playing.

We have no doubt that many of you will disagree with our choices and our rankings. While we stand by every one, we're interested in what you think. We've posted a list of the 150 top contenders on our web site at <http://www.next-generation.com/jsmid/top150/>, and we invite you to visit and try your hand at ranking them. We'll print the results in a future issue.

THE FIFTY BEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

50 INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER '98



WHAT'S THE GAME: Soccer.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Pitch games, like soccer and football, have always translated well to videogames and have been a showcase for new technology — FIFA on 3DO was one of the first truly excellent 3D console games. ISS '98 simply represents one of the finest examples of the genre. Although soccer in the U.S. enjoys nowhere near the popularity of other sports, the quality of this simulation

PLATFORM Nintendo 64 • DEVELOPER Konami • RELEASE DATE 1998

should ensure its place on every serious gamer's shelf. The graphics and control are excellent, but what really shines is the AI. Set the computer to play itself, stand back about 10 feet, and you'll be hard-pressed to tell the difference between ISS and a real game. It's that good.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: When your player gets injured, stretcher bearers come on the field, spray his leg with novocaine, and carry him off the field.

49 TOTAL ANNIHILATION

WHAT'S THE GAME: Intense science fiction realtime strategy featuring polygonal units and 3D terrain.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Not only was this the first traditional realtime strategy game to boast 3D graphics, making it a huge advance beyond the bulk of the clones that followed *Command & Conquer*, it also featured one of the best interfaces around and more than 150 units to use in combat. Unique innovations such as the field commander, unit waypoints, and true line of sight based on elevation enabled a new level of depth in an overcrowded genre, and made *Total Annihilation* a standout in the great glut of realtime strategies. Cavedog further sweetened the pot by releasing even more maps and units via the Internet. But the game's

innovations were not limited to the release. Now Cavedog has announced a unique online game called *Galactic Wars* in which players will choose sides (the Arm or the Core) in a massive struggle for a planet-filled galaxy. With new ideas being added to the title over a year after its release, Cavedog has proven that *Total Annihilation* is worth playing again and again.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Creating an army of more than 200 Peeweeps and then ruthlessly marching them over everybody else's more powerful units, then watching as their turrets impotently spin in an effort to take out the whole swarm. This is followed by the satisfying chain of explosions as the enemy's base is mercilessly crushed by peons.

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER Cavedog • RELEASE DATE 1997



48 ZORK (SERIES)



WHAT'S THE GAME: An epic series of text adventures, stretching from the seminal *Zork* (originally created on a mainframe at MIT's artificial intelligence lab) through the *Enchanter* series to the Activision graphic adventures.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: *Zork* was the first commercial adventure game (and in fact, one of the first commercial PC games of any type) and certainly belongs on any list of seminal, influential games. But despite its age, it also belongs

PLATFORM Multi • DEVELOPER Infocom • RELEASE DATE 1981 - 1997

on any list of the greatest games. Never mind the great writing or humorous tone that *Zork* and its direct descendants produced, the puzzles that the *Zork* series offers have yet to be matched by most modern adventure games (the work of LucasArts may be the lone exception). If you want a game that presents an intellectual challenge get *Zork* (the original is available for downloading, for free, by Activision).

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Hello, Sailor.

47 GRAND PRIX LEGENDS

WHAT'S THE GAME: A racing simulation that features a faithful recreation of the incredibly dangerous 1967 Grand Prix circuit.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Not only does it have the most realistic physics model yet in a racing game (so much that you can expect to hit the wall for a least a week just learning how to drive), a brilliant premise, and the best driver AI we've seen, but *GPL* enables players to do

something they simply never could in the real world. Many, if not most games do that, but few do it as convincingly or compellingly.

THE CREATOR SPEAKS: Project Producer, Matt Sentell, on one of the reasons Papyrus picked the 1967 season: "If you look back," he says jokingly, "and ask at what point in racing history were the cars absolutely the most dangerous to drive, it was probably 1967."

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER Papyrus • RELEASE DATE 1998



46 STAR CONTROL 2

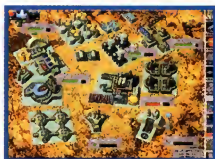
WHAT'S THE GAME: An RPG combining a sprawling mixture of space exploration, mining and trading, and space combat.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Simply put, it's huge. Few games have ever had quite the scope of *Star Control 2*. Boasting some 500 star systems containing 3,000 planets and 18 different alien races, some players felt the sheer size of the game overwhelmed the storyline and left them with no clear sense of direction. Whether you ever solved the overall game

or not, though, there were hours and hours of joy to be found just in exploring the universe and engaging in conversation and combat with any number of alien races.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: Meeting the Spathi, the universe's ultimate cowards, who abandoned their planet because it was invaded by a horde of fearsome creatures. When you reach the planet's surface, all you encounter are a few scattered, perfectly stationary teddy bears.

PLATFORM PC, MAC, 3DO • DEVELOPER Accolade • RELEASE DATE 1993



THE FIFTY BEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

45 SAM AND MAX HIT THE ROAD

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER LucasArts • RELEASE DATE 1994

WHAT'S THE GAME: A beautifully animated graphic adventure featuring Steve Purcell's hilarious characters — freelance cops Sam (a trenchcoated dog) and Max (a cute but dangerous bunny).

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: The game combines a bizarre plot (you need to help Sam and Max track down a bigfoot who's gone AWOL from the local sideshow) with LucasArts's adventure game prowess and the robust SCUMM engine.

The result is one of the most enjoyable gaming experiences to be found on a PC.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: The seamless blend of puzzle and comic effect make almost the entire game memorable. Perhaps the best example is using a bucket of fish instead of a bucket of golf balls at a driving range to trick a set of alligators into acting as a living bridge for your furry protagonists.



44 POPULOUS

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER Electronic Arts • RELEASE DATE 1987

WHAT'S THE GAME: The original "God game," *Populous* puts you in charge of a small world and a group of followers, whom you help by raising and lowering the land to make building and agriculture easier and by smiting their enemies with earthquakes and floods. Oh, and the enemies worship a rival god, controlled by either the computer or another player.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: This was the game that put Bullfrog and Peter Molyneux on the map, launching an entirely new

genre in one fell swoop. In 1987, no one had ever seen anything like it, and its little 3D world quickly became a favorite with just about everyone who played it. A perfect blend of realtime strategy, resource management, and more than a little humor, it remains unsurpassed in the genre it created.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Cutting loose with your first earthquake — oh, the simple bliss of having divine powers.



43 NFL GAME DAY (SERIES)

PLATFORM PlayStation • DEVELOPER 989 Studios • RELEASE DATE 1996 – present



WHAT'S THE GAME: In the last several years, 989's football franchise has been able to do the unthinkable and go head-to-head against EA's *Madden* juggernaut. Constantly innovative, *NFL Game Day* was the first football game to add advanced player controls and 3D graphics. Unlike *Madden*, which seems to be moving toward one-button action, *Game Day*'s control scheme enables total control over the action.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: *Gameday* was the first football

game designed for 32-bit game consoles. It featured control enhancements over the previous generations and has continued to innovate over the years. The biggest innovation was the advent of 3D graphics in '97, which enabled the game to look and feel much more realistic. Truly, this is the football game that appeals to both the hardcore and the masses.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: EA canning *Madden* '96 right before its release because of *Game Day*'s superiority.

42 SONIC (1, 2, AND 3)

PLATFORM Genesis • DEVELOPER Sega • RELEASE DATE 1990



WHAT'S THE GAME: Fast-paced side-scrolling action featuring a zany "mascot with attitude."

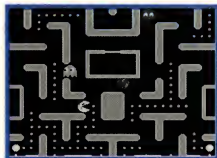
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: On paper, today, *Sonic* sounds incredibly lame: another "fast-scrolling wacky mascot with attitude." But this description ignores the fact that *Sonic* all but invented the genre, and still does it better than anyone. The speed of the game is still impressive, and the 2D gameplay let Yuji Naka's Sonic Team exploit that feature admirably. The art

direction and level design are also high points in the original three games. *Sonic* was the first zany mascot, and he is still the only one we've ever been able to take seriously. Not even Sega's efforts to dilute the character with ridiculous titles like *Sonic Schoolhouse*, or the intolerable comic book adaptation can take away from the brilliance of the first three games.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Blast processing! Oh, no, seriously, we liked the Oil Ocean zone a lot in *Sonic 2*.

41 MS. PAC-MAN

PLATFORM Arcade, PlayStation • DEVELOPER Namco • RELEASE DATE 1981



WHAT'S THE GAME: The sequel to *Pac-Man*, it featured a female Pac, more mazes, cut scenes, and better ghost AI.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: The success of *Ms. Pac-Man* all comes down to challenge. The first nine levels (to the first baby) are pretty easy, but after that something special happens. There is never any escape from the ghosts, and to do well you must do more than simply respond to where the ghosts are, you need to anticipate and plan several seconds

ahead, luring the ghosts away from where you want to be. It sounds easier than it is, and it makes the game one we consistently go back to, week after week. The game's sheer ubiquity — there is seemingly one in every bar and arcade in Christendom — also adds to its appeal, since you can actually keep playing it and improving your skills.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Those rare moments when you pass through a ghost without dying.

40 NHL 99

PLATFORM PC, Nintendo 64 • DEVELOPER Electronic Arts • RELEASE DATE 1998



WHAT'S THE GAME: Hockey has proven to be one of the easiest sports to translate to a videogame, and EA has proven itself to be the most consistent at making that translation enjoyable.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Electronic Arts has always held the lead in hockey. Although the company has occasionally slipped on the odd platform, in the odd year, *NHL* is EA's most consistent and successful sports franchise. This year is no

exception — although the PlayStation version seems to have taken a step back, the N64 and PC versions show that Electronic Arts is the undisputed master of the hockey game. The control is fantastic and the company has managed to balance the gameplay perfectly between arcade and simulation. It feels real, but it is never tedious, as realistic simulations tend to be.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Replaying your scores till your opponent quits in disgust.

THE FIFTY BEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

39 HERZOG ZWEI

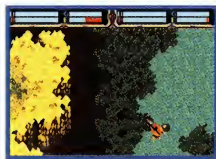
PLATFORM Sega Genesis • DEVELOPER Sega • RELEASE DATE 1991

WHAT'S THE GAME: A one- or two-player realtime strategy/action game, featuring a hovercraft/plane that ferries troops, tanks, and other equipment around 12 different battlefields. The goal is to take over and defend neutral bases on your way to transporting troops into the enemy's home base.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Totally neglected by Sega, *Herzog Zwei* was literally years ahead of its time, anticipating the

likes of *Dune 2*, *Command & Conquer*, *Cannon Fodder*, *Uprising*, and *Battlezone*. The play balance in single-player mode is almost perfect, the difficulty ramps up smoothly, and it requires a multifaceted skill set to succeed. Every true gamer should own (and play) this game.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: The ending screen, which promises a sequel that has yet to come. Hello, Sega? We're still waiting



38 BATTLEZONE

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER Activision/Pandemic • RELEASE DATE 1997

WHAT'S THE GAME: An "update" to Ed Rotberg's 3D wireframe tank combat classic, Activision's *Battlezone* was a brilliant blend of intense action and realtime strategy. The game featured the Soviets squaring off against the U.S. in a secret war fought on the dark side of the moon and beyond.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: The danger when combining two genres in one game is that too often the end product has the problems of both genres without the benefits of either. That

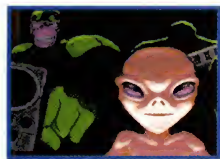
isn't the case here. Using a brilliant 3D map interface, the developers (who have since split from Activision to form Pandemic, see page 54) managed to seamlessly marry a great realtime strategy game with a hardcore action engine. The end result is one of the most compelling PC games ever released.

THE CREATOR SPEAKS: Director Andrew Goldman: "I think we nailed the action/strategy balance perfectly. We polled 300 people for the sequel and they all said to leave it the same."



37 X-COM UFO DEFENSE

PLATFORM PC, PlayStation • DEVELOPER Microprose • RELEASE DATE 1994



WHAT'S THE GAME: Turn-based, squad-level combat strategy, shown from an isometric perspective. While battling against alien invaders, you not only have to lead the team's missions, but also perform resource management tasks.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: *X-COM* revamped the turn-based subgenre by strengthening the resource management elements and adding highly intuitive interface. It also didn't hurt that the designers at Mythos dug every scrap of creepy

atmosphere from its deceptively simple graphics — your onscreen soldiers could panic and run, and every once in a while, you yourself would get the urge to join them.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: Entering a building (or worse, a downed saucer) and suddenly realizing your hapless soldiers are being sprayed by gunfire, not only by aliens whom you still can't even see, but by some new, lethal piece of alien technology whose capabilities you can't even understand yet.

36 PARAPPA THE RAPPER

PLATFORM PlayStation • DEVELOPER SCEA • RELEASE DATE 1997

WHAT'S THE GAME: By pressing buttons on the PlayStation controller, you keep time with the music and let PaRappa, a two-dimensional, hip-hop dog in a ski cap, sing along with a number of other animated characters. (Trivia note: "parappa" means "paper-thin" in Japanese.)

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: While the gameplay mechanics are essentially a throwback to the '70s electronic toy Simon, the secret to *PaRappa's* success lies in the catchiness of its music and the utter charm of its characters and setting, designed by children's illustrator Rodney Greenblatt. *PaRappa's* unapologetically 2D world contains chickens who bake cakes, cows who teach driving school, and a rastafarian frog who sings about staying with the "funky flow." Everything from the music to

the cut scenes to the animation is so well produced and fits together so seamlessly, the game is a triumph of form over function. *PaRappa* has to be played to truly understand how wonderful it is, and it appeals to both young and old, men and women, hardcore gamers and people who have never held a controller before in their lives. And don't worry, the irresistible urge to hum or sing one of the game's songs (or several of them) at odd, inappropriate times during the day is perfectly normal.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: "I gotta believe!" Or, the first time you "rap cool" and blow the walls off the In Master Onion's dojo. Or, the entire toilet level. Or — look, the entire game is pretty memorable, OK?



35 LURKING HORROR

PLATFORM Multi • DEVELOPER Infocom • RELEASE DATE 1987



WHAT'S THE GAME: A modern horror text adventure set at G.U.E. Tech, a thinly veiled imitation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Literate gamers not afraid of their keyboards will find an amazing world inside this text-only adventure game. The setting, a gothic campus complete with steam tunnels, an Alchemy Department, and professors who consort with demons, is brought to life by Dave Lebling's

excellent prose (equal parts H.P. Lovecraft and Steven King) and even better puzzle design. The setting is especially appropriate when you realize you're visiting many of the same locations the Infocom staff did when they were creating the AI technology that led directly to *Zork*.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: The irony of manipulating a graphic user interface on one of the game's computers via a text parser ("> Click on window with mouse").

FIFTY BEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

34 PONG

PLATFORM Any that use analog dials to control the paddles • DEVELOPER Ralph Baer, Nolan Bushnell • RELEASE DATE c. 1972



WHAT'S THE GAME: The ultimate abstraction of tennis, players bat a square white ball back and forth across a black screen with rectangular "paddles."

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Despite, or perhaps because, of its simplicity, *Pong* is the ultimate two-player challenge — a test of reaction times and very simple strategy stripped down to its barest essentials. Don't play a shareware version on PC — it is impossible to really control *Pong*

without analog dial (aka "paddle") controllers. Find an old *Pong* or clone at a garage sale, invite over your very best gameplaying friends, and you'll find a challenge that gives every two-player game since a serious run for its money. **MEMORABLE MOMENTS:** Trying to play *Pong* against yourself — and succeeding. (Note: See this month's Retroview for the story on the creation of the game that Nolan Bushnell used as his direct inspiration for Atari *Pong*.)

33 NFL BLITZ '99

PLATFORM Arcade, Nintendo 64, PlayStation, Game Boy • DEVELOPER Midway • RELEASE DATE 1997



WHAT'S THE GAME: Fast-paced, 3D, seven-on-seven arcade football, with no refs.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: *Blitz* creator Mark Turmell may be the brightest spot in a very dim arcade market. He has an amazing ability to discern what parts of a sports game are essential to the excitement the sport creates. He takes those, amplifies them 100 times, discards the rest, and the quarters seem to roll in. It worked with *NBA Jam* and it works here. The

combination of fast-paced, responsive gameplay, 3Dfx-enhanced graphics, and great voice-overs makes this one of the best arcade games we've played, and the ability to create plays on an N64 and use them in the arcade adds to the playability even more.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: The president of Imagine Media's Game division threatening to take a sledgehammer to the office *Blitz* machine if we didn't stop playing and get back to work.

32 WARCRAFT/STARCRAFT

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER Blizzard • RELEASE DATE 1994, 1995, 1998



WHAT'S THE GAME: Realtime strategy games from the real masters of the art, Blizzard.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: While *Warcraft* did not create the realtime strategy genre, it made it appealing to a broad audience. *Warcraft II* went on to refine the genre. Easy to play, nuanced in design, a pleasure to look at, and often a laugh riot, *Warcraft II* was nearly perfect. It also was one of the first great multiplayer strategy titles. *StarCraft* took it all

a step further, with an innovative campaign structure and fantastic game balance for endless hours of multiplayer fun. Blizzard is famous for shipping products late, but the play balance that results is so good we don't mind waiting. **MEMORABLE MOMENTS:** Clicking on units multiple times yields great gag responses. The best? The deathknight in *Warcraft II* eventually offers a menacing "When I'm done here, I'm coming for you."

31 HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC (SERIES)

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER New World Computing • RELEASE DATE 1994

WHAT'S THE GAME: A 2D turn-based fantasy strategy game, it takes about as long to learn to play as Chess (and nearly as long to master).

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Usually great games break new ground and lead the industry into uncharted territory. But sometimes the greatest games are those that refuse to get swept up in the newest fad. *Heroes of Might and Magic* was released on the cusp of the realtime, 3D revolution, and

while other games followed it stayed the course. With beautiful 2D characters and maps and absolutely brilliant strategy, *Heroes* managed to be a completely engrossing game that never once replaced quality design with new-fangled flash.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Cranking the audio when building your units in town so you can bask in the perfectly chosen operatic soundtrack.



30 SUPER BOMBERMAN 2

PLATFORM Super NES • DEVELOPER HudsonSoft • RELEASE DATE 1994

WHAT'S THE GAME: A superb multiplayer bomb-battle inside a maze. The object of the game? Blow your friends to kingdom come. Last man standing wins.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Another example of the less-is-more approach to gameplay, the rules are simple, the graphics superbly functional, and the play-balancing perfect. Of all the games that came out of the 16-bit era, *Super Bomberman 2* remains a timeless reminder of the ingenuity and purity of

gameplay that characterized Nintendo's world-beating console. The single-player game was terrible, but the multi-player game remains one of the best "beer and pretzel" party games ever invented — it's fast-paced, combines strategy with ruthlessness, and anyone can learn to play.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Just as you're surrounded by bombs, you toss one that stuns (and traps) your assassin. You're dead, but then so is the smart-ass that killed you.



29 ASTEROIDS

PLATFORM Arcade • DEVELOPER Atari Games • RELEASE DATE 1979

WHAT'S THE GAME: Maneuver your spaceship around with thrust and directional buttons, and shoot wave after wave of rocks and UFOs.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Taken directly from *SpaceWar* (including the hyperspace button), the controls enable a degree of mastery over your ship that few games have offered since. The difficulty ramps up quickly but never becomes overwhelming, and every time you die, you know it

was your fault — the game never cheats. *Asteroids* was a classic the day it was released, and it has never lost any of its appeal.

THE CREATOR SPEAKS: "Why is it still fun all these years later?" says Ed Logg, who programmed the game. "If I could answer that, I'd know what to do in every game! The bottom line is that it's simple — you know exactly what you have to do, but it isn't as easy as it looks."



THE FIFTY BEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

28 JEDI KNIGHT: DARK FORCES II



WHAT'S THE GAME: First- or third-person shooter, with the *Star Wars* license (and lightsabers) integrated seamlessly into the gameplay.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Despite occasional stumbles, LucasArts basically has the art of transporting gamers to the *Star Wars* universe down pat. Nowhere is that more evident than in *Jedi Knight*. Not only do you get to use a lightsaber, not only is there an exceptionally innovative

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER LucasArts • RELEASE DATE 1998

gameplay mechanism in the way you use your Force power-ups (light or dark side, your choice), but the level design is almost perfect. More than any other LucasArts game, *Jedi Knight* makes you feel like you are actually operating in the *Star Wars* universe.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: Racing to get out of Jerec's ship in the moments before it slams full-speed into the ground — and failing.

27 METAL GEAR SOLID



WHAT'S THE GAME: A stealth action/adventure game with a unique interface and an epic story that touches on love, death, and nuclear war.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: MGS is one of the most vibrant efforts in gaming history to bring serious ideas to games. While that would not be enough to make it great, the game also features a delicious challenge, with almost a dozen different kinds of gameplay. In some ways it's no more than an

PLATFORM PlayStation • DEVELOPER Konami • RELEASE DATE 1998

updated platformer with intriguing FMV and a simple pattern of sneak around, fight a boss, watch some FMV, repeat. However, every part of that cycle is delivered with special care. The old style has clearly been perfected with MGS.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: When Meryl Silverburgh, your companion in the game, is pinned down in an alley by sniper fire, she yells, "Get out of here!" and, "Go on without me!" It's exciting and genuinely moving.

26 GRIM FANDANGO



WHAT'S THE GAME: A 3D graphic adventure featuring characters and themes based on Mexico's "Day of the Dead."

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: *Grim* offered adventure fans funny, touching, and infuriating moments in following its characters, and it did so through a magnificently beautiful game. We had long hoped for the day when adventure games would look like walking around in an animated series, and with *Grim Fandango* that day arrived. Add to that a collection of insidious

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER LucasArts • RELEASE DATE 1998

and clever puzzles which (almost) always made sense in the context of the story, and the world finally has a graphic adventure that takes the sting out of the death of Infocom.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: The script for the second chapter is brilliant. Like *Casablanca*, although you've never seen any of these characters before, the lead character knows everyone he runs into and knows them well, and the well-written dialog tells the player all he needs to know.

25 DOOM (SERIES)

What's the game: It's like *Doom*, except ... Oh, wait, it is *Doom*.

What's the big deal: Expanding on the first-person shooter concept it pioneered with *Wolfenstein 3D*, Id took its gameplay concepts literally to the next level. No longer was the level architecture an obvious limitation to the gameplay. In fact, the level design of *Doom* in one-player mode is second really only to *Half-Life*, which hit shelves

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER Id • RELEASE DATE 1993

five years later. And despite the graphic advances since *Doom* was released, the pixelated Barons of Hell and Cyber Demons still rank as some of the scariest things that can grace your screen.

Memorable Moment: The knuckle-whitening experience of hearing a big, nasty *something* creeping around *somewhere*, then turning a corner and realizing there are about 100 of them!



24 STAR WARS (ARCADE)

WHAT'S THE GAME: Forced-scrolling, cockpit shooter with vector graphics. Players take X-Wing pilot Luke Skywalker on a daring run to blow up the Death Star. And then blow it up again and again and again.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Besides giving you the opportunity to reenact what many of us consider to be the greatest cinematic experience of our youth, *Star Wars* delivered fast-shooting gameplay with all the subtleties, and the combination

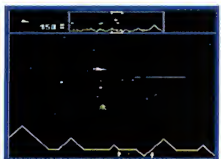
PLATFORM Arcade • DEVELOPER Atari • RELEASE DATE 1983

of tight control and vector graphics make it equally fun today. It's also a nice touch that the gameplay is perfectly paced to John Williams' legendary score. Actual voice clips are also incorporated in the design, specifically Obi-Wan's encouraging "Use the Force, Luke," which hinted at a secret bonus.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Han's "Yahoo, kid! You're all clear!" moments before you bulls-eye the ventilation shaft with your photon torpedo.



23 DEFENDER



What's the game: Fly around a scrolling landscape, "defending" humans from alien ships attempting to abduct and mutate them.

What's the big deal: Despite exceptionally complicated controls, gamers fell in love at first sight. The difficulty is high but fair — when you die, it's always your fault, and that leaves you wanting one more chance to beat the game. Eugene Jarvis spent months on the play balancing (infuriating Williams officials

so much that at one point he cleaned out his desk, expecting to be gone by the end of the day), and it shows. Seventeen years after its debut, *Defender* has yet to be equaled.

The creator speaks: Jarvis has his own explanation for the game's success: The fear of death. "The essence of the videogame is survival ... that's the most powerful instinct man has. [*Defender*] really exploited that instinct in a very simple and primal way ... tapping directly into your brain."

PLATFORM Arcade, PlayStation, Saturn, Game Boy Color • DEVELOPER Midway (Williams) • RELEASE DATE 1981

THE FIFTY BEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

22 Tomb Raider

PLATFORM PlayStation, PC, Saturn • DEVELOPER Core • RELEASE DATE 1996



WHAT'S THE GAME: A third-person action adventure starring Core's take on a female Indiana Jones, Lara Croft.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Core's basic idea with *Tomb Raider* was pretty simple: Bring the gameplay of *Prince of Persia* into 3D, mix in the plot and settings from *Indiana Jones*, add a female lead character, and shake well. The result was sheer brilliance. Fantastic level design and art direction enabled a real feeling of exploration and accomplishment. When you

played *Tomb Raider*, you felt like a tomb raider. While subsequent outings have attempted to grow the character (quite literally in certain respects), and feature list, neither of the sequels has equaled the original, perhaps because Eidos fails to understand that it was the levels, not the character, that created such an engaging experience.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Killing two wolves and feeling quite satisfied, only to venture on a bit and face a T. Rex.

21 Robotron

PLATFORM Arcade • DEVELOPER Williams/Midway • RELEASE DATE 1982

WHAT'S THE GAME: Save the last human family in this dual-joystick shooter.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: *Robotron* is all about terror. With one joystick for movement and another for aiming (you never stop firing your weapon), the game simply never gives you a moment's rest. You are on a nonscrolling screen with dozens and dozens of things trying to kill you all at once and there is absolutely no where to run. There is no defensive strategy

possible for *Robotron*: Your only choice is to fight and fight and fight. The bottom line is that the tension and challenge of *Robotron* has yet to be bested. This may be the most intense interactive entertainment experience ever created.

THE CREATOR SPEAKS: Eugene Jarvis, on playing *Robotron*: "What's great is you're always a second away from death. The entire time you're playing the game, you are about to die. I still play a couple of times a day ... the game just kicks my ass."



20 WAVE RACE

PLATFORM Nintendo 64 • DEVELOPER Nintendo • RELEASE DATE 1996

WHAT'S THE GAME: Race Jet Skis around undulating ocean courses, while performing any number of flips and tricks.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Next to *Mario 64*, no other game in the Nintendo 64's launch library demonstrated more clearly the power of the new system. Another product guided by the hand of Shigeru Miyamoto, *Wave Race* captured the rolling wave mechanics of the ocean in a way that no other game had ever managed before, and the N64's analog controller was

the perfect means to ride them. Add in a long list of trick stunts, a whole crop of extremely well-designed tracks (some of which change during the race as the tide goes in or out), and some reasonably inoffensive music, and you've got the recipe for a great game that never gets old.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Slipping under the dock during the Southern Island course after the tide's gone out and cutting seconds off your time. Also, riding the dolphin.



19 SEGA RALLY

PLATFORM Arcade • DEVELOPER Sega AM2 • RELEASE DATE 1994 (Japan)

WHAT'S THE GAME: Taming muddy, snaking dirt tracks with stupidly fast souped-up road cars, up against tough CPU and human drivers intent on leaving you upside down in a tree.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: One of the best Model 2 games, *Sega Rally* is some of the best fun you can have in a car without having to pretend that you've run out of gas. The multiplayer link-up, though expensive for arcade owners, exceeds even Daytona's lure as the ultimate group-driving experience.

The track designs are fiendishly brilliant — tight corners, breathtaking jumps, and superbly implemented water hazards, and the car control feels wonderful. This is easily one of Sega's finest hours.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: On the first track, launching into the air above the water hazard, before skimming the surface and bouncing off the next hump, while trying desperately to keep the nose of the car pointing in the right direction, and failing.



18 ULTIMA (SERIES)

PLATFORM Apple II, PC, NES • DEVELOPER Origin • RELEASE DATE 1980 – present



WHAT'S THE GAME: The longest-running PC RPG series ever.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Most PC RPGs are about hacking and slashing through anything that moves, usually while crawling through a dungeon. The *Ultima* series, however, has always been firmly grounded in a world where a character's virtues are as important as their armor class in determining success. Another, equally important factor for the series' success? Technical innovation.

THE CREATOR SPEAKS: "After retelling the 'Go kill the evil wizard story', I was, quite frankly, tired of it; and that's when we began taking much more care toward storytelling," says series creator Richard Garriott. "I really think of *Ultima IV* as a turning point in the series, where it went from being just a fun game to being a really meaningful game. Since then, we've taken very good care to craft both meaningful fictional content as well as push that technology envelope as far as possible."

17 GALAGA

PLATFORM Arcade, PlayStation, Game Boy, NES, PC • DEVELOPER Namco • RELEASE DATE 1981



WHAT'S THE GAME: Pilot a starfighter through swarms of insectoid warriors.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: With enemies that featured flight patterns that took them straight at your ship, *Galaga* took the *Space Invaders* concept to a whole new level. It offered a variety of bonus stages that were earned after playing through a set number of stages, coaxing players to get as far as they could on one quarter. Because of its diversity,

players could develop individual play styles that integrated pattern memorization and the ability to rescue a captured ship for side-by-side dual-shot action. Nearly two decades after its release, *Galaga* remains unequalled.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: Turning the game over with 9,999,999 points. The game will no longer track score beyond seven digits, leaving only the stage indicator as a way to identify how long you've been playing.

THE FIFTY BEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

16 FINAL FANTASY (SERIES)

PLATFORM NES, SNES, PlayStation • DEVELOPER Square Soft • RELEASE DATE 1990

WHAT'S THE GAME: Play the hero with the big sword and save the land from the threat of impending disaster by visiting towns, fighting in turn-based battles, and gathering a group of like-minded party members to help you.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Singlehandedly redefining the meaning of "console RPG" over the past decade, Square created a franchise that has garnered the largest and most devoted following in the U.S. and Japan for the genre. By pairing state-of-the-art technology with memorable, sometimes shamelessly melodramatic storylines, the series has successfully outlasted its competitors (*Dragon Warrior*, *Phantasy Star*) and improved with each new installment. Consistently addressing themes and characterizations on a mature level that rivals the finest examples of human drama

on in any medium (name any other game in which a character has attempted suicide, for example), the adoration of a growing audience for RPGs in the U.S. and Japan has catapulted the company into the position of a "system seller," making hardware developers scramble for Square's business.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: With Square's emphasis on character and storyline, the company has latched onto the CD format with fierce enthusiasm. Making astonishing strides in CG animation, *Final Fantasy VII* captured the imagination of the mass market with the shocking but surprisingly touching scene of the death of Aeris.



15 GRAN TURISMO

PLATFORM PlayStation • DEVELOPER Sony • RELEASE DATE 1998



WHAT'S THE GAME: The largest, most complex, in-depth, racing simulation to ever grace a game console.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: *Gran Turismo* features cars that handle better than any other racing game ever made (with the possible exception of Papyrus' racing simulations). It also has groundbreaking graphics and sound, including realtime environment mapping and the best-looking replays available on console. Plus, it's a car nut's dream —

absolutely packed with 180 licensed cars, 11 tracks (not including reverse tracks), 17 different championship races, a comprehensive arcade mode and an incredible, in-depth simulation option. Some may quibble with its relatively demanding, realistic physics model, but we're all for it.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: Earning all of the gold medals in the final round of driving tests to win a very special Nissan Nismo 400R sports car.

14 HALF-LIFE

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER Sierra • RELEASE DATE 1998



WHAT'S THE GAME: A first-person shooter with a heavy dose of story and puzzle elements.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Never mind Valve's brilliant reworking of the *Quake 2* engine — *Half-Life*'s charms go well beyond the cosmetic. It's one of the few games ever designed that successfully blends a meaningful story into an action title. Succeeding where many others have failed, scripted events and interesting characters are seamlessly integrated into

racing down corridors, crawling through air ducts, and blasting mutants from another dimension. Far from detracting from the pace, it feeds your desire to get to the bottom of things. This may well be the first truly "interactive movie" ever made.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: Racing for the switch to electrocute the Gargantua, not quite making it to the stairs, turning around, and realizing just how huge and fearsome the beast really is. You'll scream. We did.

13 RESIDENT EVIL (SERIES)

PLATFORM PlayStation • DEVELOPER Capcom • RELEASE DATE 1996

WHAT'S THE GAME: A mix of graphic adventure and action, using 3D characters over prerendered backgrounds.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: *Resident Evil* took the basic mechanics of Infogrames' *Alone in the Dark* series and ran with it. Flawless graphics, excellent music, and a top-notch storyline all combined to make a game of unparalleled atmosphere and suspense. Its only fault is glaringly bad voice acting (a problem that persisted in the generally bigger, better

sequel), but perhaps no other game has come so close to creating an interactive, thoroughly immersive horror movie. It's no surprise then that a *Resident Evil* film is in the works which, in a bizarre, incestuous twist, is being directed by George Romero, who's *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead* were *Resident Evil*'s direct inspiration.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: The utter jump-right-out-of-your-seat terror when the hellhounds come in through the window.



12 TEKKEN (SERIES)

PLATFORM PlayStation • DEVELOPER Namco • RELEASE DATE 1995

WHAT'S THE GAME: 3D, one-on-one fighting that's great in the arcade but gets better at home.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: In the transition from 16-bit to 32-bit, *Tekken* stole the crown from *Street Fighter* as the king of modern brawlers with addictive fighting in its rawest form. While *Toshinden* proved a home console could support a 3D fighting game, *Tekken* proved it could be done better than its coin-op counterpart. The game's many

characters boast the finest visual and gameplay design elements. Innovation in this series of three games is unrivaled, as it has continued to technically push the Playstation while introducing fresh new characters and improved play mechanics.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Everything from your first flashy throw (Law's flying body flop) to your first delivery of a 12-hit combo.



THE FIFTY BEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

11 RIDGE RACER (SERIES)

PLATFORM PlayStation • DEVELOPER Namco • RELEASE DATE 1994 (Japan)

WHAT'S THE GAME: Super-fast racing awash with power-slides, undulating tracks, and hidden cars.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: There are certainly better car simulations, but when it comes to fun, *Ridge Racer*, the game that helped make PlayStation cool, is the one we come back to. On paper, *Ridge Racer* actually sounds poor — the AI cheats, there aren't enough tracks, and the control has nothing to do with driving a car. In reality, however, Namco has demonstrated

that by breaking all the rules about what makes a good driving game, it has been able to deliver a great one, and *R4* looks to continue the trend.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: "Next corner's tough — watch yourself!" The heart-stopping, zig-zagging right-hander after the beach, glancing off the underside of the helicopter as you launch five feet into the air before cannon-balling into the tunnel. Pure adrenaline.



10 GOLDENEYE 007

PLATFORM Nintendo 64 • DEVELOPER Rare • RELEASE DATE 1997

WHAT'S THE GAME: First-person shooter in which the player takes the role of James Bond.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Marrying *Doom*-style shooting with trademark Bond missions, *GoldenEye* is the perfect thinking-man's shooter. Players must master an array of high-powered weaponry as well as 007 gadgets such as remote mines and spy cameras. Each mission brought a new location, new objectives, a variety of new weapons (including a tank) and

somehow managed to stay true to the film. With masterful design and uncanny balance, *GoldenEye* suspended disbelief — you were no longer the player, you were Bond, James Bond. If that weren't enough, it was also undoubtedly the best four-player multiplayer game for N64, and that includes *Mario Kart*. **MEMORABLE MOMENT:** Sighting between the eyes of an unsuspecting enemy guard, and counting the seconds until his last breath.



09 STREET FIGHTER II (SERIES)

PLATFORM Arcade, Saturn, PlayStation • DEVELOPER Capcom • RELEASE DATE 1991

WHAT'S THE GAME: Choose one of several fighters and square off head to head against another player or the CPU using a large variety of martial arts and supernatural techniques in the king of 2D fighting games.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: This is the series that saved the arcade scene back in the early '90s. The design allows for such depth of gameplay that players are encouraged to devote hundreds of hours mastering attacks and learning

how to combine them into brutal combos. The real reason for the success of the series is Capcom's attention to even the tiniest detail within every aspect of the game's design. Every detail of the game, no matter how trivial, is tuned for maximum playability.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: Learning how to pull off Guile's fabled re-dizzy combo and then relentlessly using it to finish off everyone at the arcade.



08 VIRTUA FIGHTER (SERIES)

PLATFORM Arcade, Saturn, Dreamcast • DEVELOPER Sega • RELEASE DATE 1992



WHAT'S THE GAME: The first 3D fighting game, it features the most advanced 3D graphics of any fighting game on the planet.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: *Virtua Fighter* is the most elegant fighting game ever created. With only two attack buttons, the game still offers an astonishingly wide range of martial art styles. Learning how to play *Virtua Fighter* at the expert level is less an exercise in rote memorization or pure muscle memory than it is in finesse and nuance of movement. Mastery of even

a single character requires balancing offense and reaction and is almost as demanding as mastering an actual martial art. The smooth, high-res graphics and the smart character design, combined with the almost perfect combat system, make *Virtua Fighter* one of the best game experiences around.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: The first time you manage a reversal, realize how cool it is — and get the crap beat of out you for the next week trying to perfect the technique.

07 SUPER MARIO KART

PLATFORM SNES • DEVELOPER Nintendo • RELEASE DATE 1992 (Japan)



WHAT'S THE GAME: Wickedly vicious multiplayer cartoon racing starring Nintendo's superb cast of characters.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Imitated a thousand times, but never, ever, equalled, *Mario Kart* changed the rules for the driving game and gave the world one of the most engrossing and addictive two-player experiences ever. It introduced power-ups to the genre, made excellent use of the superior capabilities of the SNES (the Mode 7 graphics, for example),

and appealed to five-year-olds and grandmothers alike. And it's still amazing fun to play today. Just don't expect to have too many friends left when you put the controller down.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: You and the few friends you have left after the races can really stick it to each other in the arena-based combat game. The joy of watching Donkey Kong exit stage left, courtesy of a well-aimed shell-missile, is priceless.

06 METROID (SERIES)

PLATFORM NES, Super NES, Game Boy • DEVELOPER Nintendo • RELEASE DATE 1991



WHAT'S THE GAME: Side-scrolling action and exploration at its best, plus a hefty dose of strategy.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Usually credited (mistakenly) to Shigeru Miyamoto (even *Next Generation* has been guilty of this), *Metroid* was the game that proved that Game Boy creator Gunpei Yokoi could design software as well as hardware. Although it owes a debt to *Thexder*, *Metroid* easily stands alone as the pinnacle of side-scrolling action shooting

on 8- and 16-bit platforms. The level design, play balance, graphics, and even the story create one of the most compelling game experiences ever.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: Never mind Lara Croft or Sarah Bryant — our first videogame love will always be Samus Aran. In 1991, discovering that Samus was a woman at the end of the original *Metroid* ranks as one of the most surprising moments in gaming history.

THE FIFTY BEST GAMES OF ALL TIME

05 QUAKE 2

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER id • RELEASE DATE 1997

WHAT'S THE GAME: The latest of id's first-person shooters, it remains the standard by which others are judged.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: *Quake 2* has a lot of problems — it's not as colorful as some of its competitors, and the single-player game leaves a lot to be desired. That said, *Quake 2* is the standard for multiplayer shooting, and we've yet to see a "Quake killer" that can keep us from returning to multiplayer *Quake* for longer than a month or so. A

wealth of shareware tools, dedicated servers, and legions of dedicated clans have kept it universal, expandable, and amazingly fun.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: With *Quake*, the memorable moments tend to be personal ones. Our favorite? When the old editor of *Next Generation* online boasted, "You almost dodged Sven's rocket," to someone he had just fragged, a split second before we gibbed him from behind — with a rocket.



04 CIVILIZATION (I & II)

PLATFORM PC • DEVELOPER Microprose • RELEASE DATE 1994, 1996

WHAT'S THE GAME: The finest strategy game ever released for any platform.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: It may not look like much: a turn-based, 2D game in which you move little tokens around on a map. However, in this case it's the perfect example of form following function. *Civilization* gives you the opportunity to grow a society from primitive times to the Space Age, balancing military goals with science and even art; the game

came first, and the deceptively simple design followed.

Few designers have ever captured the dynamics of history the way Sid Meier did here. Military strategy, resource management, technological development, art, trade, and religion all play a part. The variables are so complex, it remains the deepest, most replayable strategy game ever designed.

MEMORABLE MOMENT: Your first nuclear strike, when you discover what a messy business being the Antichrist really is.



03 MARIO (SERIES)

PLATFORM NES, Super NES, Nintendo 64 • DEVELOPER Nintendo • RELEASE DATE 1985 - 1996



WHAT'S THE GAME: In 2D or 3D, Mario defeats platform challenges, jumps on Kupa's and Goombah's, eats mushrooms, and defeats Bowser for the love of Princess Toadstool.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: Mario has spawned more innovations (and imitators) than we can count. The depth of the game design was never matched in 2D and has yet to be equaled by a 3D action platformer (see **NG 49** for more on what other 3D games can learn from Mario). The gameplay is

simply genius — Shigeru Miyamoto wrote the book on platformers. *Mario 64* was the first great 3D exploration game, and until Miyamoto's own *Zelda* wedded 3D exploration with a meaningful story, it remained the best there was.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: The fact that after all of *Mario 64*'s secrets were revealed gamers started trading tips on how to find all the glitches in the game should give a good sense for how compelling Mario's environment is.

02 TETRIS

PLATFORM Multi • DEVELOPER Alex Pajetnov • RELEASE DATE 1987



WHAT'S THE GAME: Move little shapes around as they fall to create solid lines at the bottom of a well.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: *Tetris* is the essence of gameplay at its most basic. You have a simple goal, simple controls, and simple objects to manipulate. Playing at a decent level demands total concentration, because it requires thinking, strategy, and intuition on a level rarely used in everyday life (except by professional movers and packaging designers). It

takes 20 seconds to learn how to play *Tetris*, and the rest of your life to perfect your technique, prompting some *Next Generation* staffers to consider it less a game than a Zen meditation exercise.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: Having a "good game" and doubling your previous high-score.

01 ZELDA (SERIES)

PLATFORM NES, SNES, Game Boy, N64 • DEVELOPER Nintendo • RELEASE DATE 1986

WHAT'S THE GAME: As a lone elven boy, Link, you must save the kingdom and Princess Zelda from the evil Ganondorf.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL: With incredible level and dungeon designs, Shigeru Miyamoto's *Zelda* series has always had more gameplay in its pinky finger than most other titles have in their entire bodies. From the numerous ways to interact with Link's world to the intelligent method of character growth, each successive *Zelda* game has continued to define what an action RPG should be.

Most impressive of all is the flawless transition of Link's 2D adventures into the 3D realm. In a market geared toward instant gratification, the gameplay structure of

Legend of Zelda rewards gamers who let the story and quest unfold like a good book. This is what makes the *Zelda* franchise more akin to the realization of a creative vision, rather than a product for simple consumption.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS: What makes *Ocarina of Time* particularly special is how every memorable moment from the entire series finds an echo here, from finding the Master Sword, to meeting up with Shadow Link and receiving the Fairy's Ocarina. Yet while it pays homage to past titles, events are implemented in a way that keeps them fresh, and there are more than enough new characters and events in Link's 3D adventure to be remembered on its own.



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GALLERY

The fine art of gaming



© Digital Integration 1998



These impressive images are taken from the accomplished startup sequence to Digital Integration's forthcoming *F/A-18E Super Hornet* combat flight sim. Among several notable features, the game boasts a fully interactive and operational aircraft carrier deck, complete with marshals instructing you by means of their substantial 15-hand-signal repertoire. Furthermore, a dynamic campaign system enables up to 32 aircraft to be controlled simultaneously, and yet the entire enterprise is surprisingly intuitive.



Things just go from bad to worse for the Mudokon people. In *Abe's Oddysee* they suffered the indignity of having their mouths sewn shut, but the sequel showed the situation deteriorating even further. Now, in *Abe's Exoddus*, to conceal from them the horrific task of mining their ancestors' bones (for crushing into Soul Storm drinks), the Mudokans' eyelids have been sealed as well. Luckily, Abe (main image) is here to save the day — again

Images rendered at Oddworld Inhabitant
California studios using Sci and Alias software

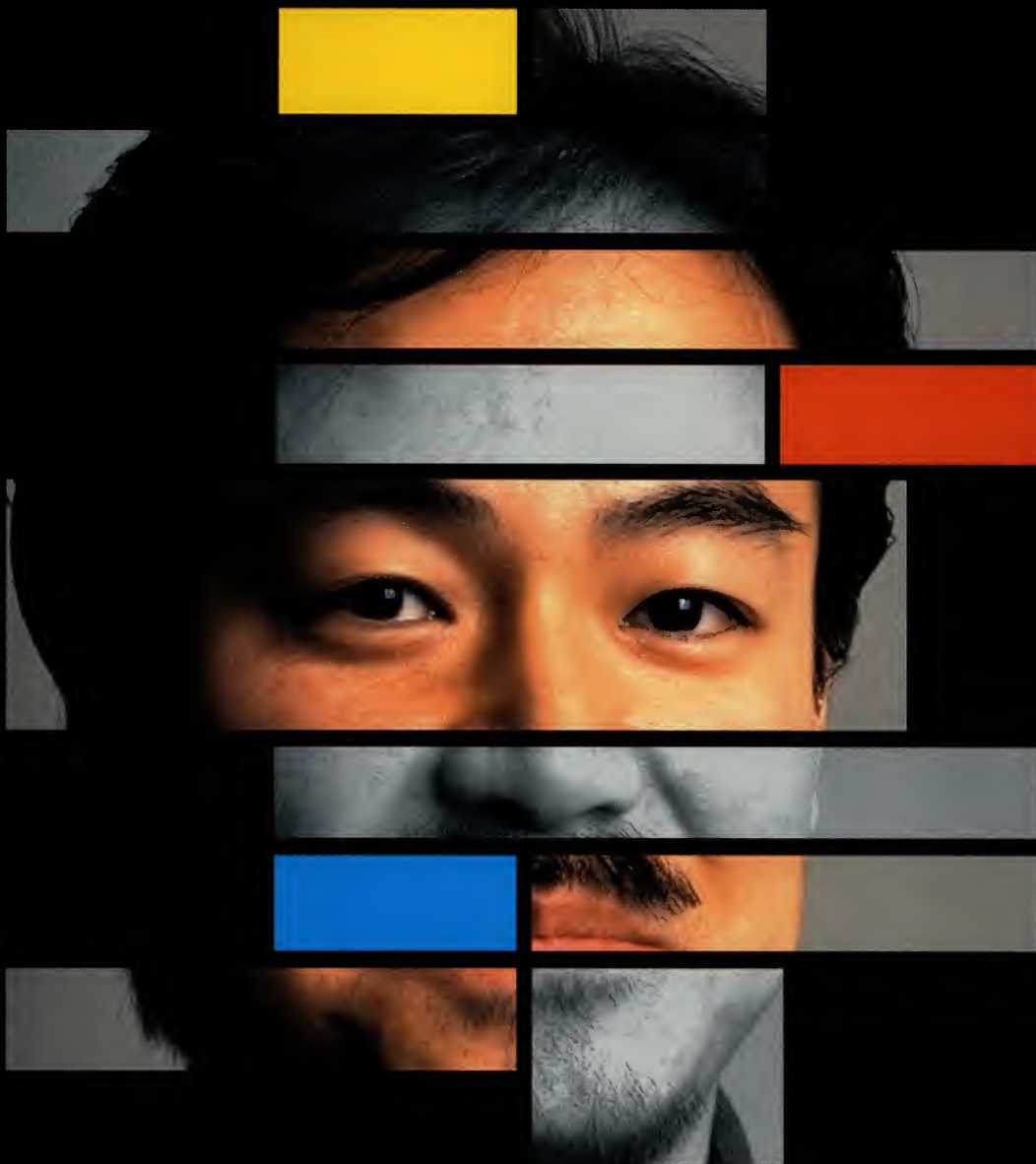


Moto Racer first impressed with its early use of 3D accelerator cards. Delphine's sequel presents more detailed hi-res backgrounds, taking in environments as far flung as the Amazon basin. These images were actually created for the original, but their quality is so high that publisher Electronic Arts is using them to promote *Moto Racer 2*



Images rendered by Thierry Baisroni, Anne Fossa
and Yon le Gall using 3D Studio 4

HIRONOBU SAKAGUCHI:



THE MAN BEHIND THE FANTASIES

Other game developers talk about storyline and character development, but Hironobu Sakaguchi prefers to talk about computer graphics and new technologies. Perhaps that's because as the designer and producer of the *Final Fantasy* series, he's already got story down pat. Still, stack *Final Fantasy* against any other RPG, and you'll see that it has the most intricate artwork, the best music, and the most advanced graphics technology. So what keeps Sakaguchi going?

Perhaps it's that he's a perfectionist who demands the highest-quality work from everyone in his organization, including himself. Today, as the president of Square USA (the Hawaii-based development arm of Square Soft, not to be confused with Square EA, the LA-based publisher) he is overseeing the simultaneous development of *Final Fantasy VIII* and the *Final Fantasy* movie.

If you thought *Final Fantasy VII* had great CG animations, just wait until you see *Final Fantasy VIII*. In one scene, a girl takes her boyfriend to a ball and tries to teach him how to dance. The image of the big oaf stepping on the poor girl's toes and the desperation in the girl's expression, is touching, sad, and funny all at once — and may be the most effective use of computer graphics to convey emotion ever.

We caught up with Mr. Sakaguchi in Hawaii for an exclusive three-hour chat about his history and the future of the *Final Fantasy* franchise. Exclusive excerpts follow.

Next Generation: How did you come up with the name *Final Fantasy*? After all, the fantasies aren't really final if they're the sixth and seventh in a series, are they?

Hironobu Sakaguchi: Basically, I wasn't really pleased with the way my first games came out before I worked on *Final Fantasy*,



so I decided "OK, this is going to be it. This is going to be my last shot." So the game was going to be my final fantasy.

NG: Then what? You were going to quit?

Mr. Sakaguchi: Yes. That was supposed to be my last game, my last project.

NG: What games did you make before *Final Fantasy*?

Mr. Sakaguchi: I made three computer games — *Death Trap*, *Death Trap 2*, and *Blasty*. *Blasty* is the name of a robot, the main character of the game. Then I made three games for the Nintendo. A racing game called *Highway Star*, in the U.S. it was called *Rad Racer*. It came with these 3D goggles. Then there was *King's Knight* and *World Runner*.

NG: *World Runner* is a lot like a Yu Suzuki's *Space Harrier*. Were you intentionally trying to imitate it?

Mr. Sakaguchi: I liked *Space Harrier*, but the main reason we made *Rad Racer* and *World Runner* was to show off the 3D programming techniques of a programmer named Nasir Gebelli. These types of games really weren't my cup of tea to begin with, but [the owners of the company] wanted to bring Gebelli's programming talent to them.

NG: Gebelli resurfaced at a reunion for Apple II game designers a few months back —

Mr. Sakaguchi: I would like to work with him again! It was funny, Gebelli didn't speak a word of Japanese and we didn't have a translator. We'd go to a restaurant and no matter what he'd order — spaghetti or eggs — they'd always bring out steak.

NG: So those games were just Nasir and you?

Mr. Sakaguchi: There was also a female graphic designer. The three of us made the games. (Sakaguchi is referring to Nordico Shibuya, who is currently working in Square Soft's Japan office on a new *Frontiers* project.)

NG: *Rad Racer* and *World Runner* were pretty good sellers. Were the executives happy with the titles?

Mr. Sakaguchi: They sold about 500,000 copies, which was fairly good.



These two studies from the forthcoming *Final Fantasy* movie demonstrate Square's outstanding graphics capabilities

I wasn't really
pleased with the
way my first
games came out,
so I decided "OK,
this is going to be
it." So the game
was going to be
my final fantasy.

I went to the president of the company and I said, "I want to do an RPG." He said, "Is that good, is that interesting?" and I said, "Yeah, it's fun." So he said "OK."

NG: Were your bosses happy when you told them you wanted to do an RPG next?

Mr. Sakaguchi: At that time, the only person you had to go to was the president of the company, and he didn't really understand games that well. Selling him on the concept of an RPG wasn't that hard. I just said, "I want to do an RPG." He said, "Is that good, is that interesting?" and I said, "Yeah, it's fun." So he said, "OK."

NG: How did you come up with the story for *Final Fantasy*?

Mr. Sakaguchi: The basic concept was really a mythical idea of how the Earth came into being, with fire and water representing everything on Earth. I represented those elements into a crystal, and that essentially became sort of the core theme for *Final Fantasy*. I took a pre-existing idea, the four or five basic elements of the world, which is sort of an orthodox and mythical concept, then I molded it into an original fantasy story.

NG: How did you begin the process?

Mr. Sakaguchi: I started with the story and the overall worldview of the game, then I had the graphics designer do the drawings. The process was different from what we do now. Currently, we write the story completely and work from the storyline.

But when we first started *Final Fantasy*, we were really limited technologically, so what I had to do first was create a rough idea for the game, then we would test it. We had to deal with the computer hardware first, so we would come up with the screen graphics and figure out — based on the limitations of the hardware — how big the world was going to be and how many locations I could have. After that was done, I would incorporate my rough ideas and build a



story based on what I had to work with. It was kind of like working backward.

NG: Where do you draw inspiration for how you make your games?

Mr. Sakaguchi: The films of James Cameron, especially *Terminator* and *Terminator 2*. The whole balance and the storylines are great, and he doesn't use flashy, quick camera cuts. He has the right sense of time as far as camera and angles, and then he tops that off with music. Everything combined just makes those good films. That's what I actually strive to achieve, so [those films are] a constant inspiration for me in my production work.

NG: Is that why you stay with RPGs, because they're more cinematic?

Mr. Sakaguchi: Making RPGs gives me the chance to incorporate an actual storyline into my games.

NG: RPGs have never done very well in the United States. Why do you think *Final Fantasy III* and *Final Fantasy VII* were so successful?

Mr. Sakaguchi: I don't know that you could say *Final Fantasy III* was so successful

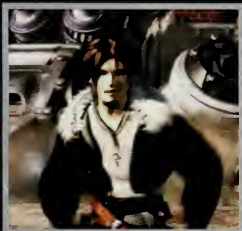
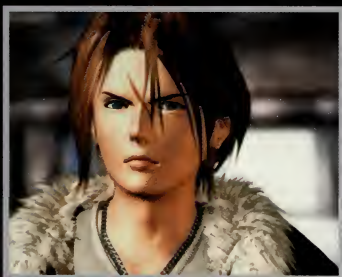
NG: It was one of the best-selling games of the year.

Mr. Sakaguchi: Oh. That game sold three million copies in Japan. We predicted it would sell millions in the U.S. too, but it didn't do that. I'm sure it didn't break one million, because our goal for *Final Fantasy VII* was to break one million in the United States.

NG: You reached that goal with *Final Fantasy VII*.

Mr. Sakaguchi: Big time, it sold 6 million copies worldwide.

NG: You've talked a little about the process of



A few moments with Nasir Gebelli

Nasir Gebelli is one of the enigmas of interactive gaming. Born in Iran and raised in the United States, he is one of the pioneers of computer gaming. Gebelli created several games in 1980 for Sirius Software, helping launch the Apple II as a game machine. After his own company, Gebelli Software, tanked, he disappeared for a few years before surfacing in Japan at Square Soft.

Shy by nature, Gebelli hates to do interviews but was amazingly cordial when trapped by *Next Generation* reporters at an Apple II reunion event, freely admitting that he hates his own games.

Next Generation: What year did you start making computer games?

Nasir Gebelli: I believe it was 1978 or 1979. Jeez, it's been that long. My first program actually wasn't a game. The first project that I did on an Apple was a project called EasyDraw, a program to create logos and characters. That's what I used to create games. Soon after that I did *Both Barrels*, a duck-hunting game. But if you ask me to name off all my games, I wouldn't even remember. I couldn't tell you! The first year I did about nine games for Sirius. The following year, I left and did a few more games under the Gebelli Software label.

NG: Many people list you and Richard Garriott as the two great computer game designers of the Apple II period.

Nasir: I don't know what to say to that! What people? I can't believe people even remember my games. I'm honored to hear that, but I just don't feel that way. I've never liked any of my projects because I always thought each was unfinished. I won't finish a project unless somebody tells me, "OK, you've got to stop now." There are always improvements; I can always do more.

NG: What console games have you done?

Nasir: Let's see, *World Runner* and *Rad Racer*. Those were for

characters that weren't graphically attractive. *Final Fantasy VII* has tall, humanlike characters, and I think that helped the game's appeal with American players.

NG: Will *Final Fantasy VIII* have many elements from *Final Fantasy VII*?

Mr. Sakaguchi: I can't say specifically, but *Final Fantasy VIII* is a steady progression from *Final Fantasy VII*.

NG: Will it have as many cinematic cut scenes as *Final Fantasy VII*?

Mr. Sakaguchi: Oh, yes. More than the 60 minutes that *Final Fantasy VII* had.

NG: Do you consider yourself more of a game designer or a writer?

Mr. Sakaguchi: I wear different masks: I'm a writer, a game designer, and I'm currently a movie director.

NG: Is working on the *Final Fantasy* movie similar to working on a game?

Mr. Sakaguchi: It's a different type of work, but it's just as enjoyable. It's probably harder than doing a game. The biggest difference and the biggest difficulty are labor and resource management. Game projects have a very clear division of labor as far as who does the programming, who does the game system, and who does the graphics. In that sense, your self-expression is limited to the specific aspect in which you're involved. Something I really didn't foresee is that when you make a movie, everyone's efforts are sort of funneled into this one channel of expression that is the movie itself.



making the first *Final Fantasy* games. What about *Final Fantasy VIII*? How have things changed?

Mr. Sakaguchi: It is much more systematic. I complete the story and the scenario from which locations for worlds are born, then the movies and the graphics and the maps are developed. Finally, all of that gets incorporated with the battle aspect of the game.

NG: How many people are involved now?

Mr. Sakaguchi: About 95 people are on staff.

NG: As opposed to the three people for *Final Fantasy*?

Mr. Sakaguchi: Actually, no. There were three people that were involved in *Rad Racer* and *World Runner*, but *Final Fantasy* had about 15 people working on it.

NG: How long did *Final Fantasy* take to create?

Mr. Sakaguchi: About a year.

NG: And how long did it take to make *Final Fantasy VII*?

Mr. Sakaguchi: A year and a half.

NG: How much will it cost to make *Final Fantasy VIII*?

Mr. Sakaguchi: The figures really haven't been totaled yet, but it will be lower than *Final Fantasy VII*.

NG: How much did it cost to make *Final Fantasy VII*?

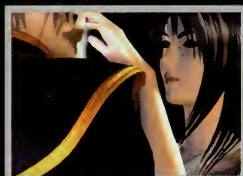
Mr. Sakaguchi: About \$25 million. *Final Fantasy VIII* will be less than that.

NG: Why do you think Americans don't like RPGs as much as Japanese players?

Mr. Sakaguchi: [Laughs] That's what I'd like to know!

NG: What made *Final Fantasy VII* so popular in the U.S.? It's not just because of the pretty pictures, is it?

Mr. Sakaguchi: Actually, I guess the pictures have a lot to do with it. In the past, RPGs had small, stumpy



the 8-bit Nintendo. After *Rad Racer* there was *Final Fantasy I* and *Final Fantasy II*, then I think I did *Secret of Mana* for Super Nintendo. That was the last game that I did.

NG: What do you do these days?

Nasir: Nothing, absolutely nothing. I did try to make a made-for-TV movie. Things didn't work out, and I got bored with it and canceled that project. Once in a while I play around with other machines. I played with a Silicon Graphics workstation, just to get myself motivated to do something different. I'd like to do special effects maybe for movies and stuff like that.

NG: Why did you leave the game industry?

Nasir: I got paid \$3,000 for my very first product. As the game industry grew, especially with Nintendo, my price changed, but by then even the money was not enough motivation. Once you do a game and bring in \$100,000, then \$100,000 is not going to do it, you want something more.

NG: You're known for being a very free spirit, for doing great things and then just walking away from the industry. Why?

Nasir: I guess it's because I've never been employed, I've never had to be disciplined. [Gebell worked as an independent contractor with Sirius and Square Soft.] I've never been under a certain schedule where I had to do or finish things. I've always done things in my time. Even though I had total control over the timing for some of the products I did for Nintendo, for example, if I told them it would take me about a month to do something, I would make sure I finished that thing I promised in three weeks. I have that sense of commitment that if I promise I have to deliver. So, I don't make a whole lot of promises.

NG: How did you like working with Square Soft?

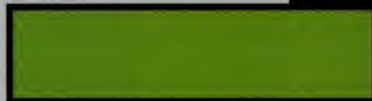
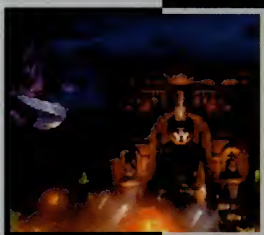
Nasir: In the beginning it was a little complicated because of the Japanese way of doing things. When I wanted things, I had to wait for them to finish some data and that was the hard part. Once I get motivated,

I want to finish things quickly, and with them I had to wait.

I worked with Sakaguchi on pretty much everything except *Secret of Mana*, and he understood me. He knew me better than anybody else, so we worked pretty well together. He knew what I wanted and what I needed.

NG: Walking away from the industry isn't an option for most people, even when they aren't motivated any longer. What's your secret?

Nasir: I've gotten a lot smarter over the years. I've always been lucky financially, whether it was from games or from my folks taking care of me, but now I've become a lot smarter and I invest wisely. Ten years ago, I could spend money faster than I could make it. I still have that problem, but in the meantime I've gotten much wiser, and I think I'm pretty secure financially. I don't need to work for money. I guess I have all the people that bought my games to thank for that.



NG: Will the *Final Fantasy* movie follow the storyline of *Final Fantasy VII* or *Final Fantasy VIII*?

Mr. Sakaguchi: I can't divulge much about the movie right now, unfortunately.

NG: The characters in *Final Fantasy VII* were fairly vulnerable human beings with magic as opposed to, say, *Parasite Eve*, which had giant monsters trouncing New York. Will the movie be more like *Final Fantasy VII* or *Parasite Eve*?

Mr. Sakaguchi: Very sharp question. Unfortunately, I can't divulge too much about the storyline, even though that was a valiant attempt. [Laughs.] But if anything, it does lean more toward a more realistic depiction of the world rather than magic and fantasy.

NG: On to a completely different subject. Are there any games you're looking forward to playing?

Mr. Sakaguchi: I'm very much looking forward to playing *Zelda*. I don't know if I should say this, but my Nintendo 64 has been sitting in a closet since I tried *Super Mario Brothers 64*, but I think I'm going to take it out of the closet for *Zelda*. I have also played *Diddy Kong Racing* and *Star Fox*.

NG: What changes do you see coming into the games in the future?

Mr. Sakaguchi: I expect hardware quality to improve, so you'll see more pretty pictures in the future. But I still expect the less graphically oriented games to be around. The bottom line is that there will be an even wider variety of games. There will be some graphics-oriented, movie-oriented, and action-oriented games and there will be games that focus purely on gameplay. Maybe there is even room for text-oriented games! I don't think all of the game makers will be going into graphically oriented games in the future because of the high cost of creating such games.

The major change I expect to see in the future — how far away I don't know — involves the use of holographs. That would cut out the whole issue of camera angles in 3D because the whole image would already be right there in front of you.

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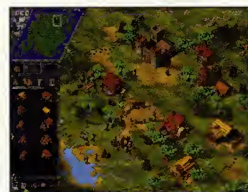
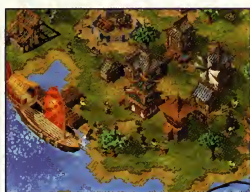
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Once in a while a game actually lives up to our expectations;
this month, it actually happened **twice**

FINALS

The definitive opinion on the latest releases

Next Generation strives to make every review as comprehensively critical as we can. Whether we liked a game or hated it, we give you all the information we can as to why.

★★★★★

Revolutionary

Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high watermark.

★★★★☆

Excellent

A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★☆☆

Good

A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★☆☆☆

Average

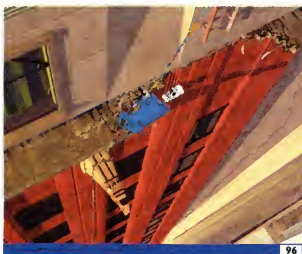
Perhaps competent — certainly uninspired.

★☆☆☆☆

Bad

Crucially flawed in design or application.

Denotes a review of a Japanese product.



94	Half-Life The wait has been more than worth it	PC
96	Grim Fandango LucasArts' latest is a masterpiece	PC
98	Fallout 2 A sequel that's as good as the original	PC
99	NHL 99 The best hockey game ever	PC

Apocalypse	PlayStation	100
Bust-A-Groove	PlayStation	100
The Fifth Element	PlayStation	100
Rally Cross 2	PlayStation	101
Tiny Tank	PlayStation	101
Twisted Metal III	PlayStation	101
Uprising X	PlayStation	102
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Blood 2: The Chosen	PC	102
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Trespasser	PC	106
NHL Breakaway 99	Nintendo 64	107
Nightmare Creatures	Nintendo 64	107
S.C.A.R.S.	Nintendo 64	107

PC action game of the year?

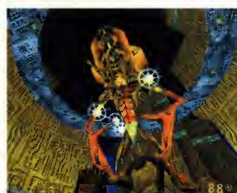
Easily. Heck, maybe of the century



HALF-LIFE

Publisher: **Sierra**
Developer: **Valve**

First, let's get the problems out of the way, and there are a few. For one thing, *Half-Life*'s much-vaunted plot scenario can occasionally get in the way of the action. For another, important characters look exactly like unimportant characters. And you can miss entire events simply by looking the wrong way at the wrong time. There are also other



Varied environments are enhanced by lighting effects and scripted movie-like sequences



Multiplayer is great fun, but nothing inspires fear like a weak, bespectacled scientist. Even one with a railgun

niggling concerns, such as the fact that identical graphics can make some parts of some levels confusing.

But that's pretty much it for the bad stuff. After that, *Half-Life* is as close to a perfect PC action game as anyone has come so far.

Using a heavily modified version of the *Quake 2* engine, *Half-Life* is a graphic masterpiece. Not only are the environments crisp and impressive, they're realistic. Detail is everywhere, sometimes it's necessary, often it's simply decorative, but *Half-Life*'s environments always feel like real places.

The modifications to the *Quake 2* engine do not simply enhance the graphics, they enhance the entire world. Scripted events help move the plot and the action: walls collapse, bridges crumble, and helpless civilians meet horrible ends. The world of *Half-Life* is as unpredictable as it is immersive. And all these events have true purpose, creatively, and practically.

The plot is movie-like in scope and seldom interferes with the pace of the game. Of course, the game is a shooter by nature, but frankly, it has equal measures of adventure, platform, and mystery.

Leaping across chasms, crawling through ventilation ducts, solving mechanical puzzles — all these tasks are hardwired into the unique, spectacular structure of the game.

You play the part of a relatively junior scientist (who also happens to be a badass) trapped in an underground research complex. An experiment in superscience has gone terribly wrong (from your perspective, at least) and unleashed some very unnatural forces and creatures into our world, presumably from some sort of alternate universe. Solving the mystery isn't simply a way to fill the box cover or the



The team at Valve, presumably flushed with success at having produced one of the best PC action adventure titles ever

manual with text — it's firmly enmeshed in the way you play the game. You actually care what happens.

Half-Life features a very strong multiplayer game, but it feels slightly incongruous given the highly realistic nature of the single-player game. The multiplayer support is very stable and impressive, but the game really excels in its interface. Configuring *Half Life* is an exercise in clarity and logic. The interface is easy to navigate and customize, and on top of that, it's exceptionally pretty. This may sound like a minor concern, but other games in this genre have appalling alternatives (*Quake 2* is a big offender).

There are unique draws to the multiplayer game, not least of which is the well-designed range of combat arenas. Neat little touches such as the ability to leave customizable graffiti on walls, floors, or more important, corpses, all add charm to the multiplayer mayhem. Valve plans to expand on the multiplayer theme with the impending *Team Fortress 2*, a highly anticipated product that now has a tough act to follow.

Graphically, this is a very strong contender in a crowded market. The *Quake 2* engine is not showing its age and still has some advantages over competing 3D



Mmm, nerds with crowbars and laser guns. The multiplayer game's strange atmosphere is unmatched in oddness

technologies, including very smooth targeting and cavernous levels. Valve's use of textures and objects is to be commended. Gritty, frightening, and imaginative, in many ways *Half-Life* is the best-looking shooter out there — and it comes down to artistic ability rather than technical prowess.

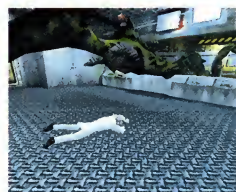
Everyone working on a 3D

shooter can learn some valuable lessons from this one game. It is fast paced, it is dramatic, and it brings the very idea of adventure on a PC out of the dark ages and into a 3D world. All that and not a single Orc in sight.

RATING



Once you reach the later levels, your newfound army will make short work of previously indestructible foes



The creatures in *Half-Life* are creepily imaginative and can cause real fright when encountered unexpectedly

If there's one thing LucasArts does well, it's graphic adventures, and this is their best yet



GRIM FANDANGO

Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: LucasArts

Every once in a while a game comes along so perfectly inspired that it transcends everything we thought we knew about where a game can take us. *Grim Fandango* is one of those games. After just a few minutes in the world of Manny Calavera and his equally dead compadres (over 50 in all), you'll be drawn in by this mesmerizing tale of death, deception, and intrigue. Graced with first-rate voice acting, music, graphics, and most of all, an amazing sense of visual style, *Grim Fandango* jumps off the screen like no other game before it.

The action begins with Manny Calavera, a travel agent in the land of the dead, frantically searching for a customer with enough good "credit" to afford a respectable travel package to the next world.

As Manny searches for the right candidate, the subtle, but meaningful, interaction between the characters (both realtime and prerendered) keeps the game moving at a brisk pace, until the player suddenly realizes that he's onto something more important than a simple sales commission.

Ironically, the most exciting thing about *Grim Fandango* is that it achieves its greatness by not trying too hard. While other games grasp at any flashy straw in their desperation to be noticed, *Grim Fandango* returns to classic values for its success: good storytelling; well-developed characters; and most important, intelligent gameplay challenges. These are the cornerstones on which a great adventure game is built, and *Grim Fandango* has them all.

At the same time, *Grim Fandango* still has plenty of flash. Even without 3D acceleration, the characters are smooth, colorful, and graced with fluid motion. The body language alone tells more of a story than all the dialog in most other games. The prerendered backgrounds also go a long way to deliver the goods. And finally, the movie-quality music and sound are exactly what the game needed to finish off a perfect presentation.

Although there are times when a particularly challenging puzzle will bring the game to a temporary halt, the carefully placed clues (often made easy to

detect because of the nuances in the voice acting) always seem to lead the way through the story. If there's anything holding *Grim Fandango* back it's some very minor control issues, which occasionally leave the player searching for just the right place to stand to open a door or pick up an item. These minor drawbacks aside, *Grim Fandango* is a smart, beautiful, and enjoyable adventure game that will leave you holding your breath waiting for *Grim Fandango 2*.

RATING



The game blends Art Deco style with a *Day of the Dead* sensibility to achieve its unique look and feel

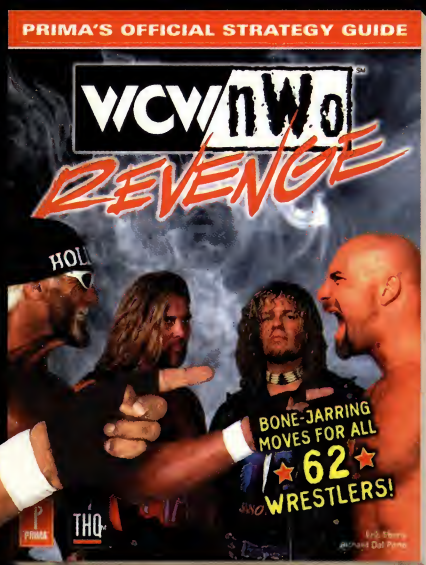


There is a long list of interesting and important characters to meet throughout the game

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It took a lot less time to get here than the original,
but the sequel is **every bit as good**

FALLOUT 2

Publisher: **Interplay**
Developer: **Black Isle Studios**



Although it offers no new gameplay tweaks, *Fallout 2* still manages to be just as big a kick as the original

One of the major pleasures of last year's gaming season was *Fallout*, Interplay's RPG with a difference. *Fallout*, a dark, brooding trek through radioactive wastelands, garnered all manner of awards and notoriety, so it should come as no surprise that Black Isle Studios has hurled a sequel into the post-apocalyptic breach.

Good news. The sequel is just as grim and addictive as the original. The Vault Dweller has been replaced by the Chosen One, a direct descendant who has been selected by the village elders to don the hallowed "vault suit" and venture into the outside world to find a miraculous panacea called the "Garden of Eden Creation Kit,"



One of your first tasks is to complete the Temple of Trials to prove your worthiness

overland treks. You can play your hero as helpful and build a reputation for reliability, or you can go savage and blow away people at every opportunity.

Either way, remember to search every pot, desk, and dead body you come across (though some outlanders get huffy if they catch you digging through their belongings). Looting the dead is a good way to add to your personal wealth.

The map is bigger, with more locations, more quests, and more powerful weapons. There's also a smarter AI that provides tougher, nastier, smarter enemies, and more adaptable allies (not so quick to shoot you in the back just because you get in their line of fire). There are new wasteland monsters, as well. You still get radscorpions, deathclaws, and mole bears, but you also get packs of wild dogs and swift giant geckos. There's also more gore, and the language can get pretty raunchy, so be warned.

And yes, the rumors are true, there is a car. It carries a hefty price, and it's missing a part. But it speeds your progress through the map, and helps you avoid catastrophic confrontations along

the way. There's also an automated ship that leads to an offshore oil rig, but you'll have to find San Francisco to use it.

Perhaps the biggest improvement is dumping the time limit. In the old game, you saved your fellow vault dwellers within a prescribed time, or they died. Now you can keep playing and blasting bad guys and building up your points. Just don't be surprised if people and places start reacting in a wacky manner once you save your village.

After all, no game is designed to last forever. Even when it's as good as *Fallout 2*.

RATING

★★★★☆



Several vaults still exist, and some are in pretty good shape

EA Sports' latest hockey sim proves that
3D graphics are just the icing on the cake



NHL 99

Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
Developer: **EA Sports**



The great thing about hockey is that there's always something happening — the action never stops. *NHL 99* captures this beautifully

When it's time to hit the digital ice for a blazing game of hockey, most savvy PC game-buyers reach for the shrink-wrap with the EA Sports emblem. And with good justification. EA Sports has a peerless track record (on PC anyway), culminating in last year's spectacular *NHL 98*, a hockey sim with amazing 3D graphics.

But sports titles never rest on their laurels. New seasons bring new teams, new players, and new PC games. And now, just in time for the season openers, EA Sports gives us *NHL 99*. Can this new entry cross sticks with its award-winning predecessor and win the ice?

Don't sweat it. *NHL 99* is a winner. It's not that there's a lot of new stuff, it's just better stuff. Gameplay is more intense. Defense is more robust with crunching body checks, and a slicker offense is more aggressive with fancy passes and harder slap shots. The AI has been tweaked, as well. Computer opposition seems smarter — especially the goalies. They're brainier and more realistic in the new version. On the Pro and All-Star levels, scoring gets downright arduous.

And then there are the fights.



Whatever EA Sports' failings on other platforms with other sports, the *NHL* series for PC just keeps getting better and better



What's a hockey competition without a couple of free-swinging punch-outs? Players are programmed to drop their gloves and sail into each other frequently, and you'll have lots of chances to practice jabs and haymakers before they get sent to the penalty box. Some PC fanatics love these hockey fights and claim they're among the best in PC gamedom. But if you're a purist and think they're silly, they can be turned off.

NHL 99 gives you six gameplay modes. You can play an exhibition game against any team, go one-on-one with goalies in shootouts, dive into the full NHL season with conferences and divisions, face the best in Stanley Cup Playoffs, or enter an international tournament and play for the gold. There's even a coaching clinic mode where you can practice skating and stick skills with passing drills against any team or player of your choosing.

There are four levels of difficulty. The game gets pretty complex on the upper levels, but *NHL 99* includes a new beginner's mode for first-time players, easy

enough to make the game fun from the first face-off. If you're an occasional player, you can enter the game as a rookie against a modestly aggressive AI, or you can step up to the pro ranks and do battle with a more challenging computer foe. Veterans can even tackle the game as an all-star and face the best of the best. But unless you're a whiz at hockey sims, expect to get your ears pinned on the All-Star level.

Let's face it, graphics are simply superb. This is the best-looking hockey game on the PC. It's colorful, it's fast, and with a good 3D graphics card, you'll see the ice spray every time a player hits the brakes. Will the puck stop here? You'd better hope so. If the NHL series gets any more realistic in years to come, you'll have to start paying the players.

RATING

★★★★★

APOCALYPSE

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **Activision**
 Developer: **Neversoft**

With a decent premise, a unique variation on gameplay, and the star power of Bruce Willis, *Apocalypse* started out with a lot of potential. However, as years passed and development teams changed, the game ended up being far less than the sum of its parts.

Originally, Willis was slated to play the role of your sidekick, assisting you throughout the game. The developers



Apocalypse is just another standard PlayStation shooter — full of special effects but lacking in substance

were working hard on creating complex AI routines that would make Willis' character behave realistically. Sadly, all that was scrapped in favor of a standard action premise that places Willis as the main character. Yup, Bruce gets to save the world once again.

Players familiar with the classic games *Robotron* or *Smash TV* will feel right at home with *Apocalypse*'s controls, especially with the Dual Shock Controller in hand. You can use both analog sticks, one for directional movement and the other for aiming. Other than that the only other button you really need is R1, which is used for jumping.

There are 12 levels in all, and while they provide a nice variety and increasing challenge, there are several instances where gamers will have a hard time figuring out where to go. The camera needs a bit of work, as well. It does a great job focusing on the action but sometimes just doesn't seem to be at the right angle. Because of this, judging jumps and dodges is more difficult than it should be.

Unfortunately, these are but two of the downfalls of *Apocalypse*. Combine them with annoying voice-overs and repetitious gameplay and you have an action title that is average at best. There really is nothing new or innovative here. And in this fourth generation of PlayStation games, this is simply not acceptable.

RATING

★☆☆☆

THE FIFTH ELEMENT

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **Activision**
 Developer: **Kalisto**



Just in time for the movie to hit cable and run every five minutes, *The Fifth Element* trundles onto PlayStation

Activision's new real-time 3D shooter, *The Fifth Element*, is, of course, based on Gaumont Multimedia's hit motion picture. You fight your way through a series of missions to find and rejoin the five elements (earth, fire, water, air, and — not love, but energy) in order to save Earth from evil incarnate.

As we're all painfully aware, movie tie-ins don't always work. If you really liked a film, you expect to see your favorite scenes and moments recreated in a game. But you also expect surprises and fresh, new gameplay. That establishes a thin line that most game developers find difficult to straddle.

There are gorgeous movie cuts here. Willis doesn't appear, but many of the other actors do, including Milla Jovovich as Leeloo, the woman who wore strategic gauze strips about the width of an Ace bandage. Thanks to Kalisto's own *Nightmare Creatures*

engine, you'll explore 26 levels with Korben (Willis' movie persona) and Leeloo. Korben carries guns. Leeloo uses karate and grenades. You'll do lots of running, jumping, ducking, crouching, and crawling as you solve puzzles, open doors, and complete missions.

It sounds good, but play is slow, and puzzles seem repetitious as you get deeper into the story. There's a frustration factor, as well. The controls are complex and you'll spend time battling your own heroes, trying to make them do what you want.

There's some mild entertainment to be had here, but only if you're willing to overlook the shortcomings — and frankly, these are legion. Don't expect many fresh surprises, or for that matter, much fun.

RATING

★☆☆☆

BUST-A-GROOVE

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **989 Studios**
 Developer: **Enix**

Bust-A-Groove is the U.S. release of the Japanese sleeper *Bust-A-Move*, reviewed in **NG 41**. A spiritual successor to *PaRappa the Rapper*, its unique concept of controlling a character in a dancing competition lets the game excel in several categories including music, motion-captured animation, and gameplay.

The U.S. version of the game, courtesy of 989 Studios, offers Stateside gamers a chance to try their hand at one of the more popular videogame niches in Japan. While gameplay is

limited to button presses and a good sense of rhythm, there is something so undeniably fun and goofy about playing *Bust-A-Groove* that it's impossible to pan it for being nothing more than a *PaRappa* derivative. After all, this is a high-production game, and the quality shows through in the graphics, music, and highly stylized character designs.

Choosing from eight initially playable characters, gamers must play through several dance-off stages. In each stage, you're required to enter in a string of *Simon Says*-type direction and button combinations in time with the beat in order to perform a set of dance moves.

Miss the beat or press the wrong button and your character will fumble. If you're successful in entering in a command, then your character will move on to the next, progressively more difficult move in their repertoire.

Overwhelmingly infectious tunes that have been translated to English for the U.S., hordes of secret dancers, and stages, charming touches such as secondary animations in stages for players who execute tough moves, and a clever, though not entirely unique, concept make *Bust-A-Groove* a game that deserves to find an audience in the U.S.

RATING

★★★★☆



Bust-A-Groove is the U.S. release title of *Bust-A-Move*, a really, really cool dancing game — that's right, a dancing game

TINY TANK

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **MGM Inter.**
 Developer: **Appaloosa/ And Now**

Tiny Tank isn't really an action game — it's a satire of action games. It's nothing more than a maniacal mission-based shooter, but the developers use every opportunity to spoof the genre. And what's even more surprising, it's actually funny.

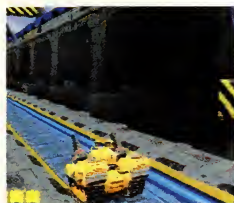
Tiny Tank is a lone attack machine with, yes, we have to say it: Attitude. While it is a straightforward blow-everything-up kind of game, the injection of humor is what makes the game succeed. Each time you take out an enemy, you're awarded an additional weapon. And with dozens of bad guys to destroy in each level, your tank will end up becoming one exaggerated pile of firepower before the mission is over. (At one point, you can even end up with Tiny wearing a huge cowboy hat.)

The only real problem is the use of Dual Shock. While the controls are mapped intuitively, the actual analog support is a bit on the touchy side — just resting your thumb on the stick will cause the turret to spin wildly, making it useless when it's really needed.

How many times have we cringed in embarrassment when a game tries to be humorous — can you say *Blasto*? But Tiny Tank succeeds in what it sets out to accomplish, both its humor and its gameplay.

RATING

★★★★☆



Tiny Tank is that rarest of breeds: A game that's actually as funny as it tries to be

RALLY CROSS 2

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **989 Studios**
 Developer: **989 Studios**



In a nice surprise, *Rally Cross 2* is actually a significant improvement over the original

When making a sequel it is important to retain the qualities of the original that made it so popular as well as add enhancements and change the things that players disliked. No game fits this description better than *Rally Cross 2*, which is a sterling example of how a sequel should be made.

The key word that sums up the changes to the sequel is "accessibility." The first *Rally Cross* was a technically excellent game that suffered from insanely difficult steering and one heck of a steep learning curve. The designers of *Rally Cross 2* fixed this flaw by widening the tracks and tightening up

the steering. In addition to fixing the game's problems, 989 went the extra mile by having tons of cars and tracks to choose from. There is even a decent track editor to play with for those who have creative tendencies.

If you haven't played the first game, then you're in for a treat. Rally racing isn't so much about speed as it about maintaining control on some off-road-type tracks. While the cars are a little bouncy, the game conveys an excellent feeling of intensity as you jostle for position during each race. Tracks include everything from deserts to unfinished construction areas

(although, realistically, we doubt there would ever be a race held in these areas) and the graphics are nicely done throughout and move at a crisp pace. Two players can go head-to-head, but sadly, the original game's four-player mode was removed from this version due to "time constraints." Oh well.

Overall, *Rally Cross 2* is a very solid second effort that sets the title well on its way to becoming an established brand — if they can keep improving the game this much every sequel.

RATING

★★★★☆

TWISTED METAL III

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **EA Sports**
 Developer: **EA Sports**

Picking up where someone left off isn't easy in any industry, but when SingleTrac left Sony holding the rights to the lucrative *Twisted Metal* license, something terrible happened. Sony looked to 989 Studios to carry on the series, but where the new team took the game, you just don't want to go.

Twisted Metal made a huge impact when the PlayStation first hit the market, but times (and tastes) have changed. *Twisted Metal III* offers nothing new. Describing the game reads a lot like shampoo directions: Drive, shoot. Repeat. And playing the game is just as much a chore.

At least in the previous versions you could use the structures for a strategic surprise. In *Twisted Metal III*, there really isn't a place to hide, and no strategy means monotonous gameplay. The arena designs are some of the most uninspired layouts we've ever seen, and the newly enhanced, exaggerated

physics cause unwanted and irritating car flips at the most inopportune times.

To its credit, *Twisted Metal III* does offer a very N64-style four-player, split-screen mode, but the framerate takes a significant hit when all four screens are displayed. The game engine was obviously only tuned for the one- and two-player split-screen, and the four-player mode looks like it was thrown in

at the last minute.

Rogue Trip and *Vigilante 8* obviously saw the glaring problems with the genre and added mission-style elements for variety. There's nothing to *Twisted Metal III* but the same drive-and-shoot action from level to level with no payoff to keep your interest.

RATING

★☆☆☆☆



Twisted Metal III is clearly a sequel too far, offering nothing that's new, and little else that's interesting

UPRISING X

Platform: **PlayStation**
 Publisher: **3DO**
 Developer: **3DO**

The original *Uprising* on the PC was an excellent blend of action and strategy that provided just the right amount of both to forge a new genre. Luckily, while *Uprising X* may be a bit lighter on the strategy element, it fits the demands of a console title, and it emerges as a solidly designed title that stands on its own.

As in the original, you control a über-tank called a Wrath, fighting futuristic armies on faraway planets, and you still have some degree of tactical command over the battlefield. Instead of the heavy resource management involved in the PC version, however, this game has simplified the system so that once you've built the necessary factories you can summon units based on timer bars.

The mission structure is designed around a learning curve that works very well, and players tend to learn advanced strategies as they progress. The controls for the game are a bit more complicated than most PlayStation games, which may initially turn off some gamers, but with practice, you'll learn to appreciate the nuances of controlling the Wrath with the dual analog sticks.

The variant of the BRender engine is excellent, and the terrain looks great and moves at a very playable 30fps. Enemy vehicles all look good and there can literally be dozens of them on screen without a hint of slowdown. This game can get very intense, and it takes careful thought to complement the

twitch reflexes you'll need to make it through the single-player campaign. There is also a bevy of two-player modes that do wonders for extending the life of the game. Overall, *Uprising X* is a unique and welcome addition to the PlayStation library.

RATING

★★★★☆



Uprising X tosses aside some strategy in favor of console-style action, but it looks and plays great

BARRAGE

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **Activision**
 Developer: **Mango Grits**



Barrage is mindless fun, but it's good-looking, mindless fun

If you're tired of hokey space plots, resource management, and bloody mayhem, here's an arcade/action shooter that might just suit you.

Activision's *Barrage* is designed to test your trigger finger, not tax your brain.

Don't look for a storyline. There isn't one. *Barrage* simply puts you in a hovercraft and launches you into five environments. There's no blood and gore, either, just enemy vehicles, disintegrating buildings, and fiery explosions. You'll fight across a prairie, through a tunnel, in and out of a canyon, under an ocean, and through downtown Chicago. Missions are simple: deactivate power buoys, destroy military targets, recover components, find a portal, and get to the next level. And the clock is ticking.

But there's a problem. You also get points for general mayhem and breakage, so one is tempted to ignore the missions and blast everything in

sight — buildings, blimps, barns. This is especially true in Chicago, where nothing is as satisfying as laying waste to rush-hour traffic.

The game is easy to learn, but tough to play. You can use keyboard toggles, a joystick, or a mouse. Unfortunately, none work very smoothly. You'll find yourself skidding off in the wrong direction frequently, with the enemy behind you.

The best part may be the graphics. *Barrage* was designed from day one to take full advantage of 3D acceleration, offering five levels of graphic detail, depending on the muscle of your machine.

As a generic shooter, *Barrage* is fun, but it won't win any awards. It is, however, relatively inexpensive at \$29.99, and that may be its saving grace.

RATING

★★★★☆

BLOOD 2: THE CHOSEN

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **GT Interactive**
 Developer: **Monolith**



The original Blood may have been a gory good time, but Blood 2 is so nondescript as to be instantly forgettable

In the season of *Half-Life* and *Unreal*, a 3D shooter that doesn't immediately stand out quickly becomes forgotten. Like its predecessor, *Blood 2* is based in equal parts on horror and humor, but while this sounds good in theory (and worked the first time), in reality, the game ditches the gothic themes of the original, then never really goes anywhere interesting.

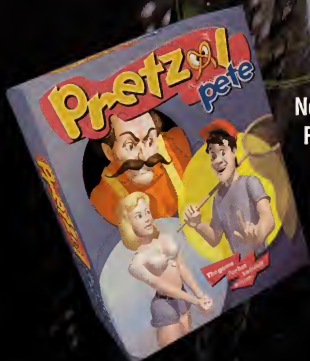
The humor and tone are completely swiped from *Duke Nukem*, even down to the grunting one-liners. Though graphically superior to the original *Blood*, there's none of the dark terror that oozed from the original. Creatures are amazingly uncreepy, and though there are some startling moments (such as the face-hugging leeches that lurk in the sewers), overall the game feels too much like a *Quake* clone to warrant any excitement.

Weapons are your standard one-shot/multishot/blow-everything-up-shot variety, and don't do any of the gory, thrashing sort of damage you'd expect from a game called *Blood*. The enemies don't help matters much either, choosing to stand and model their gore-strewn clothing as they get their heads blown off, instead of taking evasive action. With AI so erratic, most enemies can be killed with the "jump around a corner, take a shot, run back around the corner" method. The environments are pretty, but levels suffer from corridor-heavy designs that don't exploit the excellent LithTech engine. In the end, *Blood 2* seems like the *Sybil* of video games: It mimics a lot of different shooter genres, but it has no personality of its own.

RATING

★★★★☆

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THE PEOPLE'S GENERAL

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **Strategic Simulations Inc.**
 Developer: **SSI Special Projects Group**

If you've played the *Panzer General* games, you know what to expect from SSI's new *People's General*. It's a natural outgrowth of the popular World War II *Living Battlefield* series.

The year is 2005, and 19 countries have been sucked into a worldwide conflict between the United Nations (including the U.S. and Russia) and the Chinese People's Republic (hence the name of the game).

You can play either as Chinese or Western Alliance forces through two campaigns and a total of 36 scenarios. Random events create surprises, so scenarios seldom play the same way twice. Battles take place near the Russian port of Vladivostok, in the Urals, on the Korean peninsula, and around key Asian cities like Hanoi and Singapore.

Maps are hex-based, but terrain is delivered in photo-realistic fashion, with

roads, bridges, mountains, and cities. Combat units include M1A3 and T-99 main battle tanks, surface-to-air missiles, Werewolf attack helicopters, recon units, and self-propelled artillery and infantry.

Some enemy units are hidden and others labeled only by a question mark, so you don't always know what you're getting into. You quickly learn to combine armor, infantry, helicopters, and artillery into a robust striking force. A stronger unit nearly always wins a confrontation, so try to rake enemy forces with artillery from two or three hexes away before an attack.

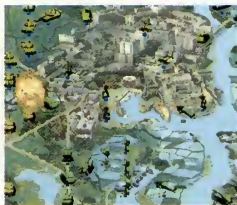
The game is relatively easy to play, but it isn't a pushover. Nor is it light on battle mechanics. The bottom line? This is a satisfying hex-based war game that is well done in every respect.

RATING

★★★★☆



The People's General adapts SSI's tried-and-true *Panzer General* gameplay to a modern battlefield



MONTEZUMA'S RETURN

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **WizardWorks**
 Developer: **Utopia Technologies**

To compare *Montezuma's Return* to *Unreal* or *Half-Life* would be unfair. Though it may look like a first-person shooter, what the designers have tried to do is capture the original *Montezuma's Revenge* platform power and put it in a 3D environment. Unfortunately, they've kept all of the pitfalls of the original genre intact as well.

What happens when you try to make a *Mario*-style jumpfest in a first-person style? A lot of dying, that's what happens. Simple things like hopping onto moving turtles or kicking the natives (there are no guns to save you here) become tedious, sloppy tasks, and it doesn't help that the controls feel more like you're piloting a hovercraft than a human being.

Monsters have a clean, cartoony look, but the levels are flat and boring, with textures put together seemingly at random. The sound effects are nothing less than atrocious. Punches and kicks sound more like you're opening windows on your desktop, not pummeling beasts.

Though a first run through a level is entertaining, you are stuck with three lives, and no continues. It's another nod to the old school-style of gaming, but in the new world of 3D the concept falls flat. Fighting action scenes are few and far between, and because of the controls, jumping and dodging quickly become tedious. Levels are much too large and slow moving to force repeated playing without saves, but they're also

too short and boring for any long-term fun. There are some nice touches, such as the cool animated death scenes, but overall, this game belongs in the "nostalgia gone wrong" file.

RATING

★★★★☆



The first-person platform game is definitely an idea whose time has not come, and *Montezuma's Return* proves it

RAILROAD TYCOON II

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **Gathering of Developers**
 Developer: **PopTop Software**

The original *Railroad Tycoon* came out almost a decade ago and quickly became a classic among fans of build-your-own-empire games. So how does one improve on a classic?

Railroad Tycoon II is a near-perfect example of how to make a superior game better. The first thing you'll notice is a new graphics engine that is visually outstanding, with a neat viewing device that backs off to show a broad, active map or zooms in to show each individual train huffing and chuffing. You get 18 scenarios that range from industrial England and the American frontier to India and the dry Russian

Steppes. There's even a scenario involving the Orient Express. The terrain maps are gorgeous and are filled with historically accurate headaches — rivers that need spanning, mountains with steep grades, forests, and swamps.

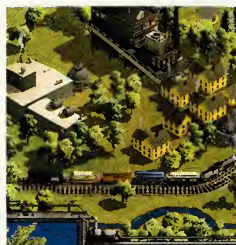
Play is slow and intense with lots of careful management, so read the manual before you dive in. You build your railroads from the ground up. You'll have to lay track, erect depots and bridges, bulldoze natural barriers, and buy your rolling stock. Don't be stingy; cheaper locomotives break down more often, and expensive double track is often more economical in the long run

than single track. But don't spend all your money at once, either. Since the goal is to amass a fortune, you need to be sure you move your passengers, products, and resources according to supply and demand, play the market wisely, and invest in individual businesses.

If you ever had a train set, this game will bring back marvelous memories. If you were one of the unfortunate few who missed out on trains, in fact, even if you never liked trains at all, *Railroad Tycoon II* is a glorious way to make up for it.

RATING

★★★★☆



Railroad Tycoon II reinvents its classic gameplay for the '90s, and does so with panache

THE ELDER SCROLLS ADVENTURES: REDGUARD

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **Bethesda Softworks**
 Developer: **Bethesda Softworks**

The *Elder Scrolls* series from Bethesda has always offered some of the most intense role-playing in the genre. With *Redguard*, however, they've added the moniker "Adventure," meaning the stats-based RPG elements have been left behind, as was Bethesda's sprawling world map. What's left is a thoroughly enjoyable action/adventure game of epic proportions.

You control a mercenary character called Cyrus as he returns to his old home of Stros M'kai after he hears his sister is missing. His search leads him through dangerous catacombs, up against evil necromancers, and even into other dimensions. Although the perspective is *Tomb Raider*-esque, the

third-person view offers quite a bit of adventuring fun, from your typical "use this item with this object" puzzle to jumping challenges that require precision and skill.

The interface shines most in combat. Hit a key to draw Cyrus' blade, and then a few simple keystrokes let you try some daring moves. The real-time sword fighting gives the game a true swashbuckling feel as you parry the attacks of numerous opponents and skewer your enemies.

The game is not without fault, however. The character animations of Cyrus don't sync up quite right with his surroundings. Also, sometimes he can be difficult to control when too many

things are moving on screen at once, which makes some of the jumping puzzles more challenging than they should be. As a matter of fact, there are just too many jumping puzzles, which will frustrate some less-agile players early on in the adventure. The lack of 3D support for anything other than 3Dfx cards will also irk many players, although the software mode gets the job done.

Even with the faults, however, *Redguard* is an impressive addition to the *Elder Scrolls* series and deserves any true adventure fan's attention.



Yup, it's an *Elder Scrolls* adventure game, and in 3D to boot, but *Redguard* makes both leaps in stride

RATING

★★★★☆

RED BARON 3D

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **Sierra**
 Developer: **Dynamix**



Red Baron 3D manages to atone for the sins of Red Baron II, and then some

Red Baron 3D isn't really a new game. It's a good game made much, much better by addressing several sins of omission in the previous version.

This Dynamix flight sim has a history almost as dramatic as the World War I dogfights it espouses. The original *Red Baron*, released in 1990, was regarded by many as a classic, thanks to realistic flight modeling and excellent graphics (for its time). So when Dynamix launched *Red Baron II* a year ago, gamers lined up in droves to buy it. And howled in protest after playing it.

The flight physics and historical atmosphere of the original were still there, and the campaign missions offered excellent variety. But the new package was buggy, and, horror of horrors, there was no 3D support. Critics complained that it was like flying a triplane with one wing missing.

Now, the bugs have been fixed, and the 3D upgrade works fine. Gamers who own *Red Baron II* can download the patches, but if you're one of those people who hear the complaints and decided to wait, your wait is over.

Now you can sit behind a pair of synchronized machine guns and fly over finely textured trenches and sprawling fields, with trees and shrubs for low-level fliers and realistic cloud and fog effects. You can fly up to 22 different WWI planes against the computer, or you can join free multiplayer battles.

If you've ever hankered to climb into an open cockpit and do battle with the early knights of the sky, this is your baby. All you need is a leather helmet, a pair of goggles, and a white silk scarf.

SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOR

Platform: **PC**
 Publisher: **Monolith**
 Developer: **Monolith**

Until now, there has been a very distinct division between the *Quake*- and *MechWarrior*-type shoot-'em-ups. Now, all at once we're confronted with a game that just plain combines the two genres, and it does it well.

Graphically, this is a mid- to high-end effort (using the proprietary and impressive LithTech engine) that is further enhanced by the addition of anime-style graphics. These impressive graphics are woven beautifully into the storyline, which progresses smoothly with the action and actually provides valuable gameplay clues. Some players might consider the structure of the game too linear and simplistic, but in one-player mode, it's helpful — some of the subterranean levels are confusing

and repetitive.

Shogo wins points on the personality front, but *Quake* fans will also appreciate the hard-edged and pyrotechnically pleasing weaponry. The fact that you switch between driving a giant robot and running around in human form has little effect on the game physics, but it does add to the variety of weapons and interaction with characters.

Obviously there are a lot of alternatives in this market, with *Half-Life* and *Sin* releasing at the same time, but *Shogo* has clear merits and stands up on its own. It's an excellent game and it will be a fine contender.

RATING

★★★★☆



Looking for something a little different? *Shogo* measures up technically and adds a different kind of personality to the first-person genre

RATING

★★★★☆

SIN

Platform: **PC**
Publisher: **Ritual**
Developer: **Activision**



If *Sin's* weapons were as imaginative as its level design (and it didn't crash so often), it might have rated one star higher

Much as last holiday season presented us with a glut of RTS games, this season looks to bring a wealth of first-person shooters. Unlike last year, however, the quality of the games seems to start at above average and run all the way up to excellent. *Sin* ranks high on this scale. Using the *Quake 2* engine to its limits, this shooter almost achieves the five stars it strives for, but it falls short in a few crucial areas.

Its generic plug-n-play backstory aside, *Sin* distinguishes itself from the pack with a few exemplary touches. The first, and most important are the awesome level designs. In terms of interactivity, enemy placement, pacing, and integrating mission goals into the gameplay, some of the levels in this game are the best we've ever seen in first-person shooters. The levels that are simply beautiful also have just the right amount of intensity to keep you wanting more. The multiplayer levels are also

excellent, with unique locations such as the back of a moving train (don't fall off) or a giant-size bedroom (you have to see it to believe it). The sound and music, by rising star Zack Belica, add immensely to the playing experience.

The weapons are only average, although they have a unique play balance that stands out in deathmatch mode as being some of the best there is. Where the game really stumbles, however, is that it doesn't provide players with anything they haven't seen before, and it doesn't exactly set the imagination aflame. The buggy retail release also discourages play with frequent crashes and load times that will make you swear you're playing with a single-speed CD-ROM (even with a complete install). However, while we feel the game may be a little light in the originality department, it certainly shines where it counts — gameplay — and definitely worth your time.

RATING ★★★★★

SPACE BUNNIES MUST DIE

Platform: **PC**
Publisher: **Ripcord**
Developer: **Joymania Entertainment**

Thanks a lot, Lara Croft. Now look what you've done to us. Ever since Eidos put a gun in Lara Croft's hand and dressed her in cutoff shorts and a tight tank top, other game companies have scurried to add their own buxom heroines to the gaming mix. This season will bring us *Sin's* red-clad Elexis, *Revenant's* Morganna, *Trespasser's* Anne, Elsa from

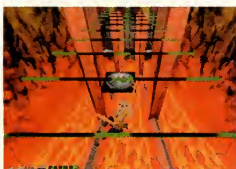
Quest for Glory V, and a host (or is that "hostess"?) of other scantily clad vixens.

And now Ripcord, the company that put tongue in cheek and thumbed us in the eye with the politically incorrect *Postal*, has jabbed the other eye with *Space Bunnies Must Die*, a space Western about mad alien rabbits and a truck stop waitress named Allison Huxter.

Bunnies from space have invaded the American Southwest and set up an evil warren in a volcano. Nobody minds a few rampaging rabbits, but these hares have crossed the line and kidnapped Allison's sister, an aspiring country singer. Now Allison must strap on her six-shooters, show some cleavage, and save her sister from torture and eventual transformation into a mutant freak.

Ride 'em, cowgirl. The game has some good action and the 3D engine is more than serviceable, although the level designs are nothing to write home about. However, saving games is awkward, and Allison's death at the hands, er, paws of rabbits comes frequently. Some odd bugs cause the occasional freeze-up, as well.

Still, this kind of trailer-park approach is different for a third-person action game. If you overlook the ridiculous plot and don't mind fighting your way through the bugs and smirking bunnies, you might actually enjoy yourself.



All right, so *Space Bunnies Must Die* isn't as awful as it could have been. At least it's funny

RATING ★★★★★

TRESPASSER

Platform: **PC**
Publisher: **Dreamworks Interactive**
Developer: **Dreamworks Interactive**



Someday a PC may exist on which *Trespasser* can run smoothly — until then, avoid it

The best thing you can say about *Trespasser* is that it showed promise. From there it goes rapidly downhill. *Trespasser* is an odd bird; it looks like a first-person shooter but bills itself as an adventure game. It has puzzle-solving elements but plays more like a 3D platformer.

"Glitchy" is just the first of a long grocery list of problems. We loaded the game on a number of different machines, and it ran on all of them with varying degrees of success (it's apparently optimized for AMD CPUs and i740 accelerators — not the most common configuration). It suffered from low framerates, choppy execution, low

resolution, and occasional freeze-ups.

The physics model is no less frustrating. It allows objects to slide and bounce around "just like in the real world," but in practice it's maddening, with long minutes spent getting a box lined up just right, only to have it bounce and tumble away once you jump on top.

The rendering engine is no beauty, either. With its poorly chosen LODs and mip-mapping horizons, objects are constantly jumping around and changing appearance, and textures are endlessly swimming all over the screen. The effect is nauseating.

But perhaps the worst problem is the robot arm-style interface. The idea is that the character's right arm is modeled, and you control the arm with the mouse and keyboard to pick up and manipulate objects (including firearms). The trouble is that the arm itself is stiff and sticks straight out, more often than not simply getting in the way. It's also ridiculously easy to get the arm stuck on something, or have a gun knocked out of your hand.

On the positive side, the dinosaurs are amazing looking and have great AI. There are even times when you can see how, with a fast enough processor, this could have been fun. In the end, though, it's clear that *Trespasser* had a reach that exceeded its grasp.

RATING ★★★★★

NHL BREAKAWAY 99

Platform: **Nintendo 64**
Publisher: **Acclaim**
Developer: **Iguana West**

There must be a clause somewhere in the N64 license that states that if you develop a hockey game, the next year's version has to be exactly the same as the original. N64 owners went through a messy debacle with Midway's *Wayne Gretzky Hockey* and its Xeroxed sequel, and now Acclaim, for some reason, feels the need to slap '99 on its existing *NHL Breakaway '98* without really doing anything to the game. Well, like Midway, Acclaim's not going to get away with it.

Over the past two years, Acclaim has taken extreme measures with its N64 development, exploiting the system's high-resolution mode

whenever possible. So what the hell happened with *Breakaway '99*? Did they give a part-time employee a weekend to work on the game? It sure seems that way. The low-resolution graphics engine, loose gameplay, repetitive sound effects, and irritating AI bugs from the '98 edition all return for the new edition. Oh, wait — Acclaim adjusted the goal crease to represent the new rule. Wow.

NHL Breakaway '99 is nothing more than last year's version with the new rosters and rules. Try to convince us otherwise, you're wasting your breath.

RATING

★★★★☆



Same crap, different year: *NHL Breakaway '99* is no improvement at all over *Breakaway '98*. Inexcusable



NIGHTMARE CREATURES

Platform: **Nintendo 64**
Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Kalisto**

Nightmare *Creatures* ditches the exploration elements that have begun cropping up in action games everywhere, and focuses on meaty action (so much that there's an adrenaline meter in the game which forces you to keep killing in order to stay alive). No searching for secret stones and hidden entrances here — it's all about kicking and slashing ugly monsters into oblivion, and the game does it well.

The textures for the N64 version are incredibly crisp, and they mimic the PlayStation version so closely that it's eerie. Surprisingly enough, even the music is a close port, rich and moody, with gothic undertones that fit the game perfectly. The color palette doesn't veer from the dull browns of the PlayStation version, and the camera (unfortunately) has a very jerky, un-N64 quality to it, but the controls are a vast improvement.

Combos are revealed at the start of every level and are easily executable with a simple set of button presses. More importantly, you can now jump around characters as they approach in order to attack from the side and back, a feature that adds a lot of flavor to the fighting.

Nightmare Creatures does grow bland after the first few levels, but the variety of items and new combos keep the game from diving into tedium. All in all, it's a welcome addition to the N64.

RATING

★★★★☆



Nightmare Creatures comes out better on N64 than it did on PlayStation, which turns out to be just good enough

S.C.A.R.S.

Platform: **Nintendo 64**
Publisher: **Ubi Soft**
Developer: **Vivid Image**

S.C.A.R.S. is best described as *Mario Kart* without the cutesy characters. All of the necessary elements of a combat racing game are here, they're just a bit more sinister looking than something that would have come directly from Nintendo.

When the game begins, the original circuit can be beaten fairly easily, but later track sets will take some work. S.C.A.R.S. walks the fine line between difficult and annoying, pushing players just enough to make them want to try again. The game avoids playing cheap, and any loss can usually be attributed to a mistake made by the player.

Visually S.C.A.R.S. looks good, an improvement over the PlayStation version. The colors are bright and vivid, with each track having a distinct look. In order to save valuable cart space, tracks do have night versions, and overall it's a bit repetitive, but even so the tracks at least look differently at night.

One of the best of the *Mario Kart* clones, S.C.A.R.S. does nearly everything right, surpassing both the graphics and the control of the PlayStation version. The game is challenging and addicting without ever annoying the player to the point of frustration. It supports up to four players via split screen and is a great way to kill time with friends.

RATING

★★★★☆



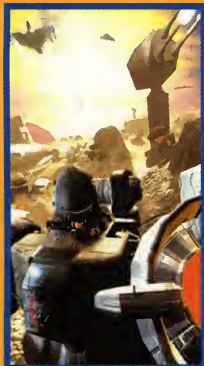
S.C.A.R.S. comes across better on N64, providing improved graphics and control over the PlayStation version

ADVANCED STRATEGIES

How designers play their games



GARRETT LINK
Assistant Producer,
Cavedog Studios



TOTAL ANNIHILATION

SYSTEM: PC **PUBLISHER:** CAVEDOG ENTERTAINMENT **DEVELOPER:** CAVEDOG ENTERTAINMENT

INTERVIEWED: **GARRETT LINK, ASSISTANT PRODUCER, CAVEDOG STUDIOS**

Next Generation: What are your strategies for playing through the game? Do you have different strategies for different parts? What are they?

Garrett Link: In the single-player game I always play aggressively against the AI. The more time it has to build its forces, the more difficult it is to overcome. In multiplayer, the strategy is really dictated by the type of player you are playing. If you don't know, I always defer to aggressive strategies, this lets me explore my opponent and maybe get lucky with an advance force that he or she may not be ready for.

I remember coming up with my patented "Love Nest" strategy one early morning. It was Core Campaign Mission 24, "Surrounded and Pounded," you start out on a plateau and Arm forces are desperately trying to knock you off.

I learned that that if you build several Air Repair Pads and lots of gun ships, then send out the swarm of planes on a patrol path in spikes that eventually bring them back over the Air Repair Pads they will continually land to repair themselves. This allows you to explore the map piece by piece at the same time that you are taking over the map. As far as the name, well, I guess it kinda looks like a nest.

Regardless, I've found this strategy to be effective in a number of different situations.



At E3 last year, we had a chance to match our skills against the Professional Gamer's League (PGL) players — needless to say, we had our egos handed to us on a plate

NG: What part of the game (course, team, army, level) do you find most difficult? What's your strategy for getting past it?

GL: I've always had difficulty with Arm Campaign, Mission 06, "The Defense of Larab Harbor." You have to defend a Moho Metal Extractor on a little island. There is constant Naval and air pressure on your troops, and about 30 minutes into the mission a wave of advanced bombers fly in and really hit the Moho hard.

I've managed to get past it just about every time by only building units that can shoot down aircraft and putting lots of construction units on patrol to heal my structures as they get

damaged. Then finally, as I get closer to the Advanced Bomber run, I'll move my Commander and any spare construction units over to guard the Moho Mine. But, no matter how you cut it this is definitely one of the most difficult missions in *Total Annihilation*.

NG: Are you the best at your game?

GL: Cavedog has many great players, but our other assistant producer, Steve Kuo, is probably the best these days. I'm probably a close second.

At E3 last year, however, we had a chance to match our skills against the Professional Gamer's League (PGL) players — *Total Annihilation* was one of the official games of the league this year — needless to say, we had our egos handed to us on a plate. We were surprised to find that their styles of play were quite a bit faster and more furious than ours were. They concentrated on collecting just enough metal and energy to keep a steady stream of level 1 units headed into an opponent's base. I know I lost more than one match against a PGL finalist!



I remember coming up with my patented "Love Nest" strategy one early morning



NG: Have players discovered strategies that you never expected for the game? Which ones have surprised you most?

GL: My eyeballs nearly popped out of my head the first time someone picked up my Commander in an Air Transport and flew him off to certain doom. There has been a lot of debate over the ethics of this tactic. "Commandernapping" as it has come to be known isn't considered in good taste, but I've found the Atlas and Valkyrie make great D-Gun targets if you have the energy.

In another ingenious tactic a player built and positioned a line of radar jammers from his base all the way to the enemy's base in a straight line. He then launched a Nuke, which traveled along the line of radar jammers and impacted the opponent's base even though his opponent had already built an anti-nuke missile silo. The radar jammers had effectively stopped the anti-nuke missile silo from recognizing the incoming nuke's signature on radar. Once it did see it, it was too late.

NG: What's your high score or best time?

GL: I once played through all 25 Core Missions in just over eight hours — no small feat.

Other than that, I think my longest multiplayer game was around five

hours in one sitting.

NG: Are there any cheats, tricks, codes, or debug insights in the game that were added for personal reasons (inside jokes, etc.)? What are they and how do they relate to the team?

GL: We hid all kinds of goofy stuff in *Total Annihilation*. I don't even remember half the things we put in just for the fun of it. I think everyone knows the +SING code. When you type it in the command line it replaces all the sound effects in the game with a homemade recording of one of our programmers singing. It was the test sound we used when the sound engine was first being implemented. We kept it in the game solely because it drove Chris Taylor [lead designer] crazy!

NG: In the course of creating the game, are there any programming artifacts left in the game? Not bugs, but "unanticipated features"?

GL: In the original 1.0 version of *Total Annihilation* a player was able to swap build menus between builders. This allowed the Commander to build rocket launchers and dragon's teeth, which he normally could not build. It still cost metal and energy, so it wasn't all that bad, but we did fix this in a patch.

You can also build four Geothermal



Plants over a geothermal vent in the Metal and Slate worlds. This was never intended, but actually makes for a nice twist on those maps.

GL: I can't remember which one, but I think either Rocko or Jethro has a limp in the walk animation. You really have to get up close and personal with the units to see it, but it's there.

NG: Any amusing bugs or glitches in the shipping version?

GL: Of course, every game has them. We had some missing artwork in the build buttons on the Arm Shipyard that we had to patch. In addition, players quickly found a way to take advantage of our Sharing of Resources feature and were cloning units like there was no tomorrow. Of course, we had to fix this.

NG: What games influenced the design of the game?

GL: All of the classic realtime strategy games played a major part in the development of *Total Annihilation*: *Command & Conquer*, *Warcraft 2*. You name it, we played it. I know they were very influential on our design - from both a "what to do" and "what not to do" standpoint.

We all wanted to take realtime strategy games to a new level with *Total Annihilation* and I think we succeeded nicely.

NG: What ideas for the game



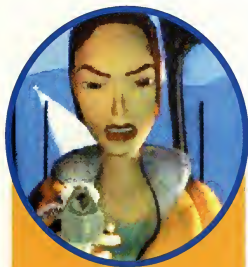
Everyone knows the +SING code. It replaces all the sound effects in the game with a homemade recording of one of our programmers singing.

ended up on the cutting room floor?

GL: Lots of stuff didn't make the final cut in *Total Annihilation*. When we first started production we actually had normal human combatants. They were sort of cartoon-y clones engaged in an absurd war based on the shape of the glassware that spawned them. We also experimented with more 20th century units like helicopters. We ended up favoring a more serious straight sci-fi tone in the end, but we had fun playing with other themes and looks at first.



"Commandernapping" as it has come to be known isn't considered in good taste, but I've found the Atlas and Valkyrie make great D-Gun targets if you have the energy.



TOMB RAIDER III

SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION, PC PUBLISHER: EIDOS DEVELOPER: CORE

INTERVIEWED: MIKE SCHMITT, PRODUCER, EIDOS INTERACTIVE

Next Generation: Do you have any advice for the player picking up *Tomb Raider III* for the very first time? What are your personal strategies for playing through?

Mike Schmitt: If *Tomb Raider III* is your first *TR* experience, spend a lot of time in Lara's Mansion. You can practice all the jumps and moves you'll need to master before venturing into the game.

The first India level also doesn't contain that many enemies and

the toughest so far. They're a bit darker, and Lara seems to go through a lot of flares. The best advice I can offer is to move slowly and carefully (it's easy to fall from high places). And, of course, save your game often.

NG: Are you the best at *TRIII* in the office?

MS: I'm pretty good (I finished *TRI* and *TRII* plus the *TR* Gold levels), but I can't say I'm the best in the office.

My assault course score (posted on the *Croft Times*) for *TRII* was higher than anyone else in the U.S. office — I tied the score of one of the game's programmers.

traps so try and spend a lot of time exploring. Also try to pick up as many items as you can possibly find. Lara needs to build up her inventory of goodies in order to succeed in the later levels.

Finally, try to use your regular pistols as much as possible. It's best to try and conserve the better weapons for the more difficult foes.

NG: What part of the game do you find most difficult? Do you have a clever way of getting past it?

MS: The London levels seem to be

Our testers logged a lot of hours in *TRIII* and they know their assigned levels better than anyone does.

NG: Of what achievement are you most proud in the game?

MS: My assault course score (posted on the *Croft Times*) for *Tomb II* was higher than anyone else in the U.S. office — I tied the score of one of the game's programmers.

I still remember the first time I saw (and killed) the original T-Rex in the first *Tomb Raider*. I knew then that we had a very special game.

NG: Are there any codes the team used for playing through that were left in the shipping version of *TRIII*?

MS: There is an all weapons cheat and a level skip in the retail version. We have a great 'flying cheat' used for debugging purposes that was pulled out just prior to release. The fly cheat allows Lara to go into her swim animation and fly anywhere on the map. (The all weapons cheat is: L2, R2, R2, L2, L2, L2, L2, R2, L2, R2, L2, R2, L2, L2, R2, L2, R2; and the Level Skip cheat is: L2, R2, L2, L2, R2, L2, R2, L2, L2, L2, L2, R2, L2, R2, R2, R2, L2.)

NG: What games have you or the team played that influenced the design of the game?

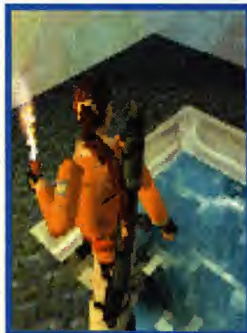
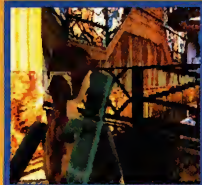
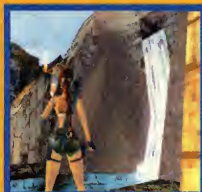
MS: *TRI* and *TRII* influenced us. We wanted to put the best features from both in *Tomb III*. Some 'stealth' elements from *Metal Gear Solid* and *Tenchu* were also influential in *TRIII*. There are some sections in *TRIII* where Lara can crawl and sneak by guards, etc. [that we borrowed from these games].

NG: What is your favorite moment in the game?

MS: The Crash Site level is great. If you don't kill the T-Rex a couple of raptors will eventually attack him and Lara can watch the dinosaurs battle it out from above. The new enemy AI makes the game much more realistic than the first two *TR* adventures.

NG: What ideas for the game ended up on the cutting room floor?

MS: We had hoped to offer the user a choice between Save Game methods (save game crystals or save anywhere/anytime). Unfortunately the team wasn't able to incorporate this into the game so we went with crystals on the PSX and save anywhere/anytime on the PC. There are also various moves and vehicles for Lara that were tested out but for one reason or another didn't make the final game.



The new enemy AI makes the game much more realistic than the first two *TR* adventures

ZELDA ADVANCED SECRETS GUIDE

SYSTEM: NINTENDO 64 PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: NINTENDO

One of the reasons The Legend of Zelda ranked number one in this month's Fifty Best Games feature (page 72) is its amazing level of detail and richness. Throughout the quest, there are a number of side adventures and secrets to discover — solving

them doesn't affect the final outcome of the game, but they do give it a special depth. We'll let you solve the regular game on your own, but if you're looking for information on how to solve the sub-quests, read on.

GETTING ALL THE GOLD SKULLTULAS

In Kakariko Village, you'll undoubtedly stumble across the House of Skulltula that houses six "cursed" family members. In order to free five of the family members, you'll need to collect 50 Gold Skulltulas or more. You'll find these creatures scattered throughout the game, in dungeons and on the world map. The key to finding them is to listen for the scratching noise they make and always hunt them at night. You won't find them during the day.

Once you collect 10 or more of these Gold Skulltula tokens, return to the House of Skulltula to speak with the family member that has been freed. They'll give you a special item for your troubles. Below is a list of where to find each of the Gold Skulltulas and a secondary list of the items you'll receive from each family member.

ON THE WORLD MAP AS YOUNG LINK

Description

Behind Know-It-All Brother's home
Inside Dirt Patch near Item shop
Inside Dirt Patch in area south of Lone Skull Kid
Inside Dirt Patch in area NW of shortcut to Zora's River
Inside crate near door in Hyrule Gate's guard room
In Secret Grotto next to tree that's near secret castle entrance (need Song of Storms)
Roll into tree near entrance
Roll into tree near entrance
On outer wall of House of Skulltula
On brick pile in unbuilt house
On outer wall of house near Death Mountain Trail (to the left)
On ladder leading up watch tower
On dirt wall (need Boomerang)
Inside dirt patch to right of entrance
Inside dirt patch in front of Dodongo's Cavern
In secret cave along right-hand side of trail (need Bombs)
In boulder maze room on top floor of Goron City (need Bombs)
Under crate near cave entrance to area
In dirt patch near warp point (need Bug)
Roll into tree near gate
On back of shed in corral
On outer wooden wall to left of cow shed (need Boomerang)
On top-story window of Malon's house (need Boomerang)
Roll into tree near entrance
On ladder near entrance to Zora's Domain
Roll into tree near Great Fairy's Cave
At end of large petrified log on outer wall (need Boomerang)
On back wall of Lake Laboratory (need Boomerang)
Inside dirt patch next to Lake Laboratory (need Bug)
On pillar of Flame Arrow platform in center of lake
In Secret Grotto next to tree on left-hand side of Hyrule Castle entrance (need bombs)
In Secret Grotto in center of stone circle near Gerudo Valley entrance (need Hammer)
At top of waterfall to right of log bridge near entrance (need Boomerang)
Inside Dirt Patch on platform at base of canyon river (need Bug)
Inside Dirt Patch outside main entrance

Location

Kokiri Forest
Kokiri Forest
Lost Woods
Lost Woods
Hyrule Market
Hyrule Castle
Hyrule Castle
Kakariko Village
Kakariko Village
Kakariko Village
Kakariko Village
Kakariko Graveyard
Kakariko Graveyard
Death Mountain Trail
Death Mountain Trail
Goron City
Death Mountain Crater
Death Mountain Trail
Lon Lon Ranch
Lon Lon Ranch
Lon Lon Ranch
Lon Lon Ranch
Zora's River
Zora's River
Zora's Fountain
Zora's Fountain
Lake Hylia
Lake Hylia
Lake Hylia
Hyrule Field
Hyrule Field
Gerudo Valley
Gerudo Valley
Desert Colossus



You'll find these creatures scattered throughout the game



SKULLTULA REWARDS

The best prizes for collecting Gold Skulltula tokens are accessible after grabbing 50 of them. You should only think about acquiring the remaining 50 if you're a self-proclaimed gaming connoisseur. Below is the list of what you'll get for each group of 10 Skulltulas you collect.

10 Skulltulas =

Adult's Wallet
(carries 200 Rupees)

20 Skulltulas =

Stone of Agony (allows Rumble Pak to detect Secret Grottoes)

30 Skulltulas =

Giant's Wallet
(carries 500 Rupees)

40 Skulltulas =

Bombchu

50 Skulltulas =

Piece of Heart

100 Skulltulas =

Giant Rupee (200 Rupees)

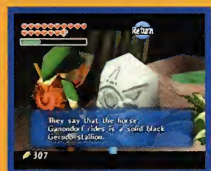




IN DUNGEONS

Below is a tally of how many Gold Skulltulas you'll find in each dungeon.

Dungeon	Number
Great Deku Tree	4
Dodongo's Cave	5
Jabu Jabu's Belly	4
Forest Temple	5
Fire Temple	5
Ice Cavern	3
Water Temple	5
Well Bottom	3
Shadow Temple	5
Spirit Temple	5



ON THE WORLD MAP AS AN ADULT

Description

On back outer wall of House of Twins (need Hookshot)
 Magic Bean Platform in area northwest of Zora's River shortcut
 Before entrance high up on right-hand wall (need Hookshot)
 On back side of suspended platform (need Hookshot)
 Magic Bean Platform near Dodongo Cave Entrance
 In rockslide area, behind rock nearest the ladders leading to Great Fairy's Cave (need Hammer)
 On outer wall near the Secret Grotto on upper ledge (need Hookshot)
 On outer wall near the entrance to Zora's Domain (need Hookshot)
 At top of waterfall when frozen (need Hookshot)
 In Secret Grotto under marble rock outside Great Fairy's cave (need Silver Gauntlets)
 In crate at bottom of Lake Laboratory diving pool (need Iron Boots)
 On top of huge tree on platform with Flame Arrow plaque on it (need Longshot)
 On back wall above Impa's home (need Hookshot)
 On backside of carpenter's tent
 On stone pillar across from entrance to carpenter's tent (need Hookshot)
 On high dirt wall above center entrance to building (need Hookshot)
 On pole of north target in archery range (need Hookshot)
 On wall inside stone building
 Magic Bean Platform
 On back of palm tree near Fairy Fountain (need Hookshot)
 On back of stone arch along lava's edge (need Hookshot)

Location

Kokiri Forest
 Lost Woods
 Sacred Forest Meadow
 Goron City
 Death Mountain Trail
 Death Mountain Trail
 Zora's River
 Zora's River
 Zora's Domain
 Zora's Fountain
 Lake Hylia
 Lake Hylia
 Kakariko Village
 Gerudo Valley
 Gerudo Valley
 Gerudo Fortress
 Gerudo Fortress
 Haunted Wasteland
 Desert Colossus
 Desert Colossus
 Gannon's Castle

GETTING ALL THE HEART PIECES

Over the course of the game, you'll be able to extend your life-meter to encompass 20 Hearts. Nine of these Hearts are only available by collecting each and every Heart Piece available in the game. Below is a list of their locations and how to get them.

AS A CHILD

Location	Requirement
Lost Woods	Play Saria's song to Skull Kid through left tunnel from entrance
Lost Woods	Complete three full songs while playing along with two Skull Kids
Hyrule Market	Find Richard the puppy and return him to his owner at nighttime
Hyrule Market	Win three rounds at Bombchu game
Hyrule Market	Complete Treasure Chest game
Kakariko Village	Collect 50 or more Gold Skulltulas
Kakariko Graveyard	Participate in Heart-pounding, Grave-digging Tour with Dampé
Kakariko Graveyard	Underneath tombstone
Lon Lon Ranch	In cow shed behind moveable crates
Goron City	Use bombs to shake up Giant Urn
Zora's River	Play Song of Storms to frogs in water
Zora's River	Complete bug-catching game with frogs in water
Zora's River	Use chicken to reach top of grassy platform
Zora's Domain	Light all torches in cave beneath waterfall
Lake Hylia	Catch a lunger at the Fishing Pond
Lake Hylia	Touch bottom of Lake Laboratory diving pool
Hyrule Field	Down the Secret Grotto to the entrance to Lake Hylia

AS AN ADULT

Location	Requirement
Hyrule Field	In Secret Grotto next to tree near Lon Lon Ranch
Zora's River	On ledge near Zora's Domain entrance
Zora's Fountain	On Iceberg
Zora's Fountain	On floor of lake
Ice Cavern	Trapped inside pink icicle
Lake Hylia	At top of Lake Laboratory spire
Kakariko Village	In caged area of Impa's house
Kakariko Village	Inside the windmill on wooden ledge
Kakariko Village	From man on rooftop
Kakariko Graveyard	Magic Bean Platform
Kakariko Graveyard	Win second race against Dampé's ghost
Death Mountain Trail	Magic Bean Platform
Death Mountain Crater	In small recess of climbable wall near warp
Death Mountain Crater	Magic Bean Platform
Gerudo Valley	Magic Bean Platform
Gerudo Valley	In wooden crate on far ledge down to river
Thieves' Hideout	In treasure chest on roof above entrance
Gerudo Fortress	Achieve higher than 1000 points in horseback archery contest
Desert Colossus	Magic Bean Platform

GETTING ALL THREE EMPTY BOTTLES

Throughout the game you'll be able to find different items to put into bottles. Things such as fairies, bugs, and Blue Flame are all important to unlocking every secret in the game. But you'll only have one bottle if you simply play straight through. Below are short descriptions on how to find the other three bottles to add to your inventory.

KAKARIKO CUCCO OWNER

As a child during your first visit to Kakariko Village you'll meet up with an allergy-plagued female searching for her lost Cuccos. If you agree to help her out, you'll need to locate all seven birds scattered around the village in order to be rewarded with an empty Bottle.

SUPER CUCCO GAME

At the Lon Lon Ranch as a child, Link can participate in a minigame if you visit Talon in the two-story house near the entrance to the ranch. Speak with Talon, and he'll offer to let you play the game for 20 Rupees. He'll throw three "Super" Cuccos into a bunch of regular Cuccos and your job is to pick them out. Watch where Talon throws the birds, and if you pick them out within 30 seconds, he'll give you a bottle filled with Lon Lon Milk. Once

you use the Milk, the bottle is yours to keep.

POE HUNTER GAME

When Link reaches adulthood, you'll be able to find a Ghost Hunter in the building, which formally housed the Main Gate Guard in Hyrule Market. If you have an empty Bottle and Epona, you can catch Big Poes out in various spots of Hyrule Field. Chase them down with your Fairy's Bow, then capture their spirits in a Bottle. If you return the Big Poe to the Ghost Hunter, he will give you 100 points on your own ghost-hunting "card."

Collect more than 1,000 points and he'll reward you with the last empty Bottle. (Note that there are two different Poes you can catch, and Big Poes are the only type that the Ghost Hunter will count toward your card. Big Poes are quicker and wear hoods as opposed to regular Poes.)



Throughout the quest, there are a number of side adventures and secrets to discover that give the game a special depth

GETTING THE BIGGORON'S SWORD

The most powerful weapon in the game, Biggoron's Sword not only deals double the damage of the Master Sword, but it also deals it at twice the normal range. You won't be able to equip a shield when you're wielding Biggoron's Sword, but because of the weapon's range — you won't need one. This quest is only available to Link as an adult. Follow the steps below when you're stumped for where to go next.

1 Talk to the woman in Kakariko Village who collected Cuccos when Link was young. She'll give you a Pocket Egg to take care of. Wait for a whole day to pass (or you can play the Sun's Song) and the next morning, the Pocket Egg will hatch. Return to the woman and she'll swap the Pocket Cucco for a Blue Cucco.

2 Take the Blue Cucco to the Lost Woods and turn left once you enter. At the foot of the small, mossy pedestal where a Skull Kid will play then disappear, you'll find the brother of the woman in Kakariko Village. Use the Blue Cucco to wake him up, and he'll ask you to take a Weird Mushroom to the potion shop in Kakariko Village.

3 This next step is timed, so once you're handed the Weird Mushroom, hightail it to Kakariko Village. Make sure to approach the Potion Shop near the back gate of the village during the day. If it's nighttime, use the Sun's Song to make daytime return. Enter the shop, then exit through the back door. Climb down the ladder and up into the next building. Give the elderly clerk the Weird Mushroom and she'll give you some Potion in return.

4 Take the Potion back to the Lost Woods and you'll discover that the Cucco lady's brother has disappeared. In his place you'll find a Kokiri resident who will offer to take the Potion off your hands. She'll give you the Poacher's Saw and ask that you give it back to its owner.

5 Head over to Gerudo Valley and speak with the carpenter standing outside of the tent. Give him the Poacher's Saw and he'll give you the Broken Goron's Sword to give to Medigoron back in Goron City.

6 Do as the carpenter asks and return to Goron City to speak with the humongous Goron on top of Death Mountain. He'll offer to fix the Broken Sword, but he seems to be having a problem with his eyes. He'll give you a Prescription for some eyedrops that can be redeemed from King Zora.

7 Head to Zora's Domain and speak with King Zora. Give him the Prescription and he'll swap it for the Eyeball Frog. There's a time limit on the effectiveness of the Eyeball Frog, and you'll need to haul it all the way over to Lake Hylia. Use Epona to cut some time from the run and head to the Lake Laboratory at Lake Hylia.

8 Once you reach the Lake Laboratory, give the Eyeball Frog to the scientist inside. He'll take the frog and turn it into the World's Finest Eyedrops. You'll need to bring the Eyedrops back to the Big Goron on top of Death Mountain within the short amount of time given. Use Epona and make it fast!

9 Once you have successfully given the World's Finest Eyedrops to the Big Goron, he'll happily make you the Biggoron's Sword for you after three days. You can speed up the process by using the Sun's Song. Congratulations.

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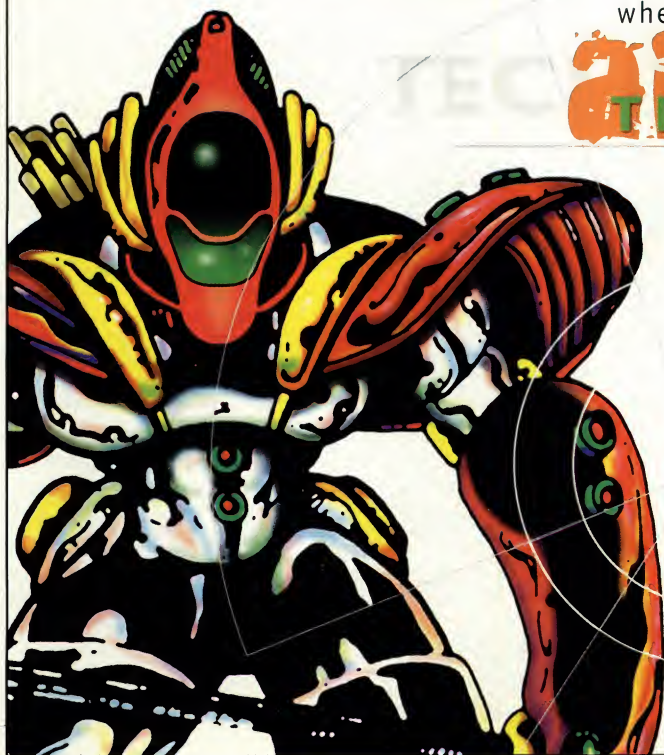
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ENDING

Next Generation does the Time-warp

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO?

Astrochase

First Star Software

Astrochase by Fernando Herrera set the bar for Atari 400/800 graphics. The game was submitted to a software contest and won First Star. Soon after, the author founded First Star software, and created many classic games.



QUESTION

What classic arcade shooter by Exidy paved the way for *Star Raiders* and other first-person space games? Hint: It featured Tie fighter-style enemies.

System Shock

For Atari, 1982 was a critical year. Its 2600 was showing signs of slowdown, and a new competitor, Coleco, entered the market with the Colecovision, a system that promised and nearly delivered arcade-perfect ports. With the threat of a major assault on their market share, Atari scrambled to deliver the Atari 5200, the "Super System." Consumers soon discovered that the so-called "Super System" was actually a modified Atari home computer. The concept wasn't bad; Atari home computers were capable of delivering the same quality games as the Colecovision. What consumers expected, however, was the ability for the 5200 system to play their current library of Atari 2600 titles, which it didn't.



Coleco promised an adaptor to do just that on its system, and soon after, Atari announced a similar peripheral for the 5200. In the end, the 5200 largely played host to ports of Atari's home computer hits rather than brand-new, 5200-specific software. The biggest problem with the system, however, was the controllers. Not only did they break at an alarmingly fast rate, they had no auto-centering function (push it left, it stayed left). Despite reams of memos from engineers complaining about the joysticks, they were released anyway.

The 5200 was not a huge success, so Atari hoped to correct their mistakes by delivering a better system known as Atari 7800, and make no mistake, it was to have built in 2600 compatibility right out of the box.

Retroview

by **Steven Kent**, author of a forthcoming book on the history of videogames

THE MILITARY CONTRACTOR

Before *Pong*, before *Computer Space*, there was a little brown box in a high-security room on the fifth floor of a red brick building belonging to a large military contractor. In 1967, very few people knew what was happening in the Equipment Design Division of Sanders Associates. Of the few executives who knew what was making the strange noises, most disapproved.

For three months there were guitar sounds coming out of this little room on the fifth floor. It sparked all kinds of rumors. This is a military electronics company. Everything is classified. You don't walk in and out of any place without having either a key card or keys. And here's this room with guitar sounds. All sorts of rumors started floating around about what we were doing in there.

Ralph Baer

The project was the intellectual offspring of Ralph Baer, a largely self-educated man who learned about electronics by taking a correspondence course. In 1967 he was busy managing a 500-employee department at Sanders. Among Baer's best attributes as an engineer was his methodical recording of every step of the inventing process. Because of this meticulous record-keeping, he knows exactly when and where he first got the idea to make games that could be played on a television.

I'm sitting around the East Side Bus Terminal during a business trip to New York thinking about what you can do with a TV set other than tuning in channels you don't want. And I came up with the concept of doing games, building something for \$19.95. This was 1966, in August. Now you have to remember, I'm a division manager. I have a \$7 or 8 million direct labor payroll. I can put a

couple of guys on the bench who can work on something. Nobody needs to know. Doesn't even ripple my overhead. And that's how I started.

Ralph Baer

The first man Baer assigned to his team was Bill Harrison, a man who was well versed in transistor-circuit engineering. While Baer designed the basics for his television game, Harrison did most of the implementation. While Baer and Harrison shared a great practical understanding of electronics, neither knew how to make a fun toy.

Their game design displayed a red box and a lever. Players pumped the lever as quickly as they could, and if they worked it enough, the color of the box changed from red to blue. The idea was that the box represented a house that was on fire, and the lever represented a water pump.

In 1967, Baer added an engineer named Bill Rusch to the team. Rusch brought some much-needed

Metal Gear Solid 1 and 2

It's difficult not to enjoy the irony in *Metal Gear Solid*'s near-universal billing as 'innovative.' Although it is, without question, easily one of the more inventive PlayStation titles in development, much of its heavily documented content can be traced back to its distant forebears — *Metal Gear* and *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake*.

On initial inspection, the original MSX/NES *Metal Gear* bears little resemblance to the recent 32bit update. But a moment's play reveals that the much-lauded 'stealth' aspect of MGS is an integral feature of protagonist Snake's debut.

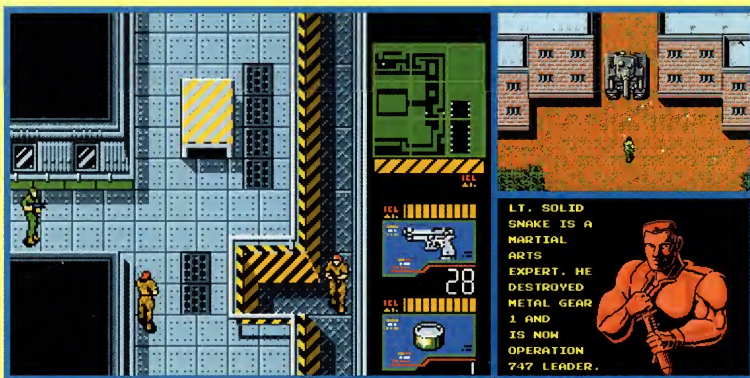
With guards treading predefined or semirandom patrol routes, dextrous use of scenery is a prerequisite for players wishing to progress in this simple, yet involving adventure.

Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake is, however, a markedly more complex creation. Part of its appeal is its interesting use of logical puzzles. At one point, Snake must rescue a hostage. Rather than attempting a

one-man attack, players must follow a guard to the captive's secret location, where a coded knock from the unfortunate prisoner reveals Snake's next objective.

Sadly, *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake*'s original MSX2 release suffered from its indigenous format's failure in the West, and an official conversion was deemed unworthy of the expenditure it would involve. It's a measure of MG2's qualities, therefore, that a group of Web-based enthusiasts have created a Japanese-to-English conversion (see <http://www.bekkoame.or.jp/takatemp/mgear2us.htm>).

System	MSX/MSX2
Publisher	Konami
Developer	In-house
Released	1987/89



The original *Metal Gear* made an appearance on the NES and MSX, and revealed stealth-heavy gameplay that would later be dragged into 3D on the PlayStation. *MG2* appeared on the NES and MSX2

understanding of fun and games, as well as a certain lack of discipline.

My biggest problem that summer was motivating Rusch. He was extremely creative and extremely lazy — a hard-to-motivate guy. He was brilliant. Also, he played really hip guitar.

Ralph Baer

To keep Rusch productive, Baer allowed him to continue working on a project playing guitar chords through a box that dropped them an octave, changing them to the pitch of a bass guitar. Hence the strange guitar sounds floating through the halls.

With Rusch on board, the games began to take shape. He made a game in which one player chased another through a maze.

The first games were all two-person games in which players controlled every object on the

screen. In May or June, 1967, Rusch suggested a new game in which a hard-wired logic circuit projected a spot flying across the screen. The object of the game was for players to catch the spot with manually controlled dots. Over time, the players' dots evolved into paddles, and the game became ping pong.

As a military contractor, Sanders couldn't suddenly go into the toy business, so Baer had to find a customer for his invention. He nearly licensed it to a cable company, but the depressed state of the cable industry prevented the deal from ever taking shape. Baer urged his bosses to notify television manufacturers about the project. General Electric, Zenith, and Sylvania all passed. RCA almost bought into the project — contracts were written but never signed. Finally Magnavox became interested in Baer's invention, and a contract was signed by the end of 1971.

Production started in the fall and early units were shown at Magnavox dealerships in May, 1972. They called the finished product "Odyssey."

Magnavox did a really lousy engineering job — [they] over-engineered the machine. Then they upped the price phenomenally so that the damn thing sold for \$100. Here's this thing I wanted to sell for \$19.95 coming out at \$100. Then in their advertising, they showed it hooked up to Magnavox TV sets and gave everyone the impression that this thing only worked on Magnavox TV sets.

Ralph Baer

Not surprisingly, *Odyssey* failed to thrive at \$100. However, the game was good, and when the concept was revived as an arcade game by Nolan Bushnell and Atari, the electronic entertainment industry as we know it today was born.

NG

ANSWER

Starfire. Its bitmapped 3D graphics would have had Lucasfilm lawyers knocking on Exidy's door if it wasn't distributed in the late '70s, before intellectual property lawyers descended on the game industry.

Letters

Thank you for a year and a half of incredible reading. Ever since I was introduced to your magazine, I have been blessed (finally) with a well-designed, well-thought-out, and provocative experience each month. Just as there are so many subpar videogames on the market, there is also lots of horrible gaming literature, mostly written for three-year-olds. Chock full of bad writing and terrible editing, these mockeries are disgraceful. Thanks for sticking to your guns and providing all of us half-intelligent beings with an uncanny experience.

Bryan J. Berry

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We generally don't print letters of adoration, but after a long, arduous holiday season, it just seemed like a good idea to let one through. Thank you.

In the "The Secret of Namco's Success" (NG 47), you stated on the timeline that *Winning Run* was the first arcade game to feature polygonal graphics. I believe that credit

should go to Atari's *I, Robot*, which was released in 1984. It consisted of two types of stages — one of which was a *Space Harrier*-type shooter and another that had the player controlling a robot whose goal was walking over specifically colored blocks. The choice of two horribly placed camera angles that were nearly directly to the rear of the robot made this seemingly simple game close to unplayable. Fortunately, there was an unenterprising alternative mode to do nothing else but draw shapes on the screen for a specified time limit. Needless to say, *I, Robot* didn't quite become a hit.

D. Christopher Goodman

chris@certifax.com

You call those graphics? Seriously, though, you got us. The editor who wrote the Namco article has had his blood replaced with molten lead.

In your Alpha on Sega's *Star Wars Trilogy* (NG 47) you state that LucasFilm was interested in "Expanding its *Star Wars* franchise into the arcades

for the fourth time."

In fact, the *Star Wars Trilogy* will actually be the fifth *Star Wars*-based arcade game. The previous four are, *Star Wars* (the Atari vector-graphics game), *The Empire Strikes Back* (also from Atari and also a vector graphics game), *Return of the Jedi* (also from Atari), and finally *Star Wars* (from Sega).

The Empire Strikes Back is almost impossible to find, but it did in fact exist. I played the game many years ago in an arcade. Whether the game was only tested or actually released I am not sure. Just thought I'd tell you. Keep up the great work.

Jeff Swerdlow

jeff@ticket-2-ride.com

You're quite correct. The editor who wrote the piece has had a pinky removed with bolt cutters to underscore the lesson of the difference between four and five. (And regarding *The Empire Strikes Back*, it was actually available as an add-on kit for the original *Star Wars*, but since *Star Wars* performed so well, very few were ordered.)

I noticed that in the Letters section of NG 48 a lot of people were complaining about the cover of issue 46. I don't know what the hell they're bitching about. Is the quality of the cover even close to as important as the quality of the magazine? NG has great reviews and a lot of features I love. I don't care what cover is made of. All I know is that every time I open my mailbox and see an issue of NG in it, I know I am going to get the quality gaming coverage that no other magazine can offer. Thanks for the great mag!

Matt LaManna,
Mahwah, NJ

Well put, and thank you, but one detail you neglect to mention is that with the thinness and general non-durability of the gatefolds in NG 46 and 47, all that quality inside wouldn't last as long either.

Write about now

I could have sworn that in NG 47 it says that *Tomb Raider III* would be featured in NG 48. So I was wondering when I got issue 48, why Lara wasn't on the cover, and there was also no mention of the article "A Sequel Too Far" or of Lara or *Tomb Raider III* at all (except for "Do Videogame Characters Stand a Chance in Hollywood?"). What happened? I am one of the biggest fans of the game, and finding out would mean a lot to me.

Eric Harris

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As you're probably aware by now, we had to push back our *Tomb Raider III* review to issue 49 due to unforeseen delays in the availability of what Eidos considered a reviewable version of the game, something which happens all too frequently in this industry. Because it's our policy not to review a game unless the publisher says it's comfortable with the stage of development, we had no choice but to delay the review.

How is Sega going to set up the Dreamcast in regards to online gaming? Will my friend and I be able to link up over our phone lines and play the new *NHL* together? Or do we have to go through Sega's site and pay a fortune in order to play each other? If the price of the site is included in the price of the game then that would be OK. I would rather pay an extra \$10 for a game and have free access to the site rather than paying an hourly, daily, or monthly fee.

Paul S. Preston

ultimate_gamer75@hotmail.com

Very little is known about Sega's online Dreamcast plans in the U.S. It is known that SegaSoft's HEATNET technology has been tapped to provide some kind of Internet support, but what form this will take is something Sega is



What's Sega's Internet strategy for Dreamcast? Does Sega in fact even have an Internet strategy? Hmmm...

not yet willing to divulge. If it worked similarly to the HEAT model, however, there would be a monthly fee for the service, but you'd access it through your own ISP — in other words, no expensive long distance calls. Whatever Sega decides, we'll certainly keep you up to date.

On the cover of **NG 48** you proudly proclaim that *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* is "The Game of the Century." This creates an interesting predicament, doesn't it? I thought *Mario 64* was the best game of all time. Have you changed your stance or are you placing *Mario* and *Zelda* in different categories and therefore *Mario*'s status as number one does not change?

Don't be so quick to call *Zelda* "The Game of the Century" just yet. The century isn't over.

The Harvey Guy

theharveyguy@usa.net

Mario was the best game of all time when we wrote that, but *Zelda* has since eclipsed it. What happens if a better game comes out before 2001? We'll bust that hype balloon when we come to it.

I love *Next Generation*, and I read the mag from cover to cover. One thing I noticed in this issue that I've not seen in others is the Advanced Strategies section. What the hell are you thinking?

This is not a kiddie magazine with sections that let readers just flip to the tips section to find out cheats and ways to beat games. **NG** has always been a magazine with in-depth reviews on games, videogame industry news, the latest products, and the history of games. Why do you need to add a tips section? If people want tips, they can get the *Gampros*, *EGMs*, etc. They don't need *Next Generation*. You're a magazine with integrity, don't stoop to the levels of those other magazines. It's just a waste of eight pages. You could run more reviews of

games or include more news of what's going on in the industry.

Worse, you try and hide it by putting in interview form. If people want tips, you should just give them tips. But *Next Generation* isn't the magazine for this. Please, just get rid of them.

**Derek Woo
Whittier, CA**

The addition of the Codes section does merit some explanation, so here it is: When *Game Buyer* closed, its former subscribers began receiving *Next Generation*. Because tips were a big part of *Game Buyer*, we decided to incorporate them into **NG**. We would like to point out, though, that the tips section is an additional eight pages above and beyond the normal size of the magazine. So we aren't losing anything by adding codes. If you don't like the section, we advise you to skip it.

I was browsing through the magazine aisle, and the fabulous cover of **NG 47** took my breath away. Ever since I bought that issue, I've been looking for the picture on the cover but I haven't been able to find it. Where did you get it, and if possible, where can I get a copy? If you could help me out, I would be very grateful.

Joe Zhang

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Namco created the *Ridge Racer Type 4* artwork exclusively for use on the cover of **NG 47**. However, Namco will no doubt be using it again in promotional materials and other items, especially as it prepares to release *R4* in the U.S., so keep your eyes open.

There are few things that move me in a big way. One of those things is when a *Next Generation* staff member leaves. I don't know what you did to help this great magazine, but on behalf of all of the people subscribed to



Yes, *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* is the "game of the century." We said so, and that's that

Next Generation, good-bye Cathy and Mike. May you have good times wherever you are going.

Garrett Johnson
Ross405@aol.com

Cathy Lu left to work on Yack.com ("The guide to live Internet events and chats") as a Web editor, while Mike Mika went from garage programming in his apartment to designing games full time at Digital Eclipse. We're sure they appreciate your good will, and thank you.

In **NG 47**, we failed to credit photographer Hiroki Izumi for taking the pictures of Namco's

Shigeru Yokoyama.

In **NG 48**, the gremlins were out in full force, resulting in three major errors: First, we failed to credit Jeff Burke for creating the Link model that appeared, digitized, on our back cover and in *Intelligence*. Also in **NG 48**, we incorrectly credited "Origin's" Chris Roberts with creating the *Wing Commander* movie. While Chris Roberts is the director, he is working, of course, at his new start-up, Digital Anvil, which has acquired the movie rights to the property from Origin.

Finally, we listed Bruce Shelly as lead designer of *Age of Empires*. In fact, the lead designer was Rick Goodman. *Next Generation* regrets the errors.

NG

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